

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
NEW DELHI.



Aide-de-Camp's Library

Aide-de-Camp's Library



सत्यमेव जयते

Rashtrapati Bhavan
New Delhi

Accn. No. 389

Call No. IX(6)-B

OFFICE OF THE MILITARY SECRETARY TO
THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA.

RULES FOR THE A.-D.-C.'s LIBRARY.

1. This Library is strictly for the use of His Excellency, his family and the Personal Staff.

2. The Library will remain open on week days only between the hours of 10 A.M. and 12 NOON, and 2 P.M. and 4 P.M.

3. Readers are allowed to take only three books a fortnight and after these are returned, new books will be issued.

4. Readers taking books out will ensure that they have filled in particulars in the Library Register maintained by Captain Davinder Singh, A.-D.-C. i/c., Library. *No Books will be issued from the Library without his knowledge.*

5. All care should be taken of the books and under no circumstances should be given to anyone on loan.

6. For any loss or damage, current cost of the book(s) will be realised.

D. N. PRAKASH, *Sqn.-Leader,*
Dy. Military Secy. to the Governor-General.

ALBERT THE GOOD

By the same author

THE FLAME ON ETHIRDOVA
SOLEMN BOY
JUDITH SILVER
THISTLEDOWN AND THUNDER
THE NEW ZEALANDERS

With the Dean of Windsor

LETTERS OF LADY AUGUSTA STANLEY
LATER LETTERS OF LADY AUGUSTA STANLEY
A VICTORIAN DEAN



THE NONPAREIL.

A NEW AND MUCH ADMIRER ~~PEAR~~^{PEAR} TO BE INTRODUCED AT THE

ROYAL TABLE.

ALBERT THE GOOD

By HECTOR BOLITHO



LONDON
COBDEN-SANDERSON

1932

First published March 1932

Printed in England for
R. COBDEN-SANDERSON LTD.
by the Shenval Press
on paper supplied by
Spalding and Hodge Ltd.
and bound by the
Leighton-Straker Bookbinding Co. Ltd.



Dedicated to
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE
DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG & GOTHIA
*whose example has brought new honour and
affection to the Coburg name, with the author's
humble duty and gratitude for the kindness His
Royal Highness has shown to him in pernitizing
him to use so many valuable and unpublished
documents from the archives in Coburg.*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

FOUR YEARS AGO, I went to Coburg for the first time. On the anniversary of the Prince Consort's birthday, Prince Hubertus of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, his great-grandson, showed me over the little castle of Rosenau, four miles away from the town. The succession of old-fashioned rooms, with their copies of *Empire* furniture, and the outside scene of trees, and sunshine, were the same as they were when Prince Albert and the Queen had been there for their summer holidays, almost a hundred years before. There were oak trees in the garden, planted by the great Queen herself and there was an old gardener who hobbled out of his cottage to tell me stories of Albert's childhood. He picked me a rose from the garden that the Prince had made and tended.

This day and others spent in the Castles and in the town of Coburg made me wish to write the Prince's story. Theodore Martin had already made a monumental work out of Prince Albert's life. But I had always felt that the Prince's true self was drowned in his vast and conscientious biography.

My ambition was strengthened when I went to the Coburg archives and discovered all the letters the Prince had written to his brother, during the twenty years he was Consort to the Queen. In spite of the great difference in their characters, his brother was one of the few people to whom the Prince opened his heart, and it seemed to me that these letters were the foundation for a true and complete record of the Prince's life in this country.

The story of his childhood in Coburg has never been written in English. The domestic tragedy which led up to his mother's divorce was hushed by the Victorians, and nothing

but rumour and malicious invention provided English people with a picture of the Coburg Court as it was during the first years of Prince Albert's life.

Among the old courtiers I met in Coburg was Oberkammerherr Paul von Ebart, who had edited the letters of the Prince Consort's mother. He has allowed me to use these letters in writing the early chapters of my book. This first part of the story is of importance, because the letters disprove for ever the suggestion that the infidelity of Prince Albert's mother affected the succession or the racial purity of the English Royal Family. It is certain that there could have been no misdemeanour until at least four years *after* her children were born. The present Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Oberkammerherr von Ebart and the Keeper of the Archives in Coburg have been very generous in helping me, with documents and advice, to be absolutely accurate in writing this part of my book.

The discovery of so much new material created a fresh difficulty for me. The huge, detailed, and annotated biographies the Victorians used to write have passed out of fashion. A new kind of biography is now being written, with much of the novelist's technique to give rhythm and excitement to the narrative. I wanted my book to be reliable and authoritative, but I also wanted it to be read. So I have been obliged to try to write without the dullness of the vast Victorian biographies and yet with sufficient authority and inverted commas to justify all my statements.

Students of the century may be surprised by the way in which I have avoided political history. I have tried not to load my book with the intrigues and battles of politicians, but to tell the story of the great political changes only in so far as they affected the Prince's life.

Many English people of Prince Albert's day did not understand the self-conscious German who so often failed to put them at their ease. But I think that the new letters in this

book will help this generation to understand the devout, unselfish and cultivated man who contributed, more perhaps than the Queen herself, to the growth of this country during the forties and fifties of the last century.

The author begs to thank H.R.H. the Grand Duke of Hesse, H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and the Dean of Windsor for reading the manuscript and making valuable suggestions. He wishes also to acknowledge the help of Miss G. Evans-Gordon and Fraulein Alice Lorentzen for translations of German documents and letters.

HECTOR BOLITHO

*Wartburg,
Eisenach.*

September, 1931.

CONTENTS

Introductory Note	vii
Chapter One	i
Chapter Two	8
Chapter Three	14
Chapter Four	24
Chapter Five	31
Chapter Six	39
Chapter Seven	46
Chapter Eight	56
Chapter Nine	64
Chapter Ten	72
Chapter Eleven	83
Chapter Twelve	91
Chapter Thirteen	98
Chapter Fourteen	104
Chapter Fifteen	113
Chapter Sixteen	121
Chapter Seventeen	127
Chapter Eighteen	138
Chapter Nineteen	148
Chapter Twenty	155
Chapter Twenty-one	166
Chapter Twenty-two	177
Chapter Twenty-three	182
Chapter Twenty-four	187
Chapter Twenty-five	195
Chapter Twenty-six	199
Chapter Twenty-seven	202
Chapter Twenty-eight	206
Chapter Twenty-nine	216

CONTENTS

xi

Chapter Thirty	223
Chapter Thirty-one	231
Chapter Thirty-two	240
Chapter Thirty-three	249
Chapter Thirty-four	260
Chapter Thirty-five	264
Chapter Thirty-six	272
Chapter Thirty-seven	277
Chapter Thirty-eight	282
<i>References</i>	286
<i>Bibliography</i>	301
<i>Index</i>	302

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Nonpareil	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The Queen and Prince Albert	<i>Facing page 72</i>
Prince Albert driving his favorites	142
The Queen and Prince Albert at home	178
The Royal Family : The Prince of Wales afloat in his new boat on Virginia Water.	234

Chapter One

§ 1 — August 1817

PRINCESS LUISE¹ of Saxe-Gotha was married in the summer, when the parched fields were alive with blue chicory flowers and the trees, heavy with apples, sprawled over the road. She was a child of sixteen, 'radiating gracefulness and bewitching her surroundings.'² She was happy when she left her father's castle in Gotha to ride over the borders of his Dukedom as the bride of Prince Ernst of Saxe-Coburg.

Little more than a year before her betrothal, she had been confirmed. After the ceremony, she had thrown herself about her step-mother's neck and burst into tears. But she was radiant when she drove away as a bride. Her father had given a thousand loaves of bread to the poor on the day of her betrothal, and at the great feast, the Ducal orange-garden had shone with the 'good-mannered of all ranks.' When she and Ernst exchanged rings at the wedding, thirty-six cannon shots announced the glorious moment to the town and countryside.

While the beauty and the music of the feasts made the world gay about her, the little Princess sang, for she had a trousseau—a hundred delicious dresses in their boxes. Waiting for her was the handsome Prince who was to carry her off when the last flag had fluttered and the last note of music had died away over the sunny gardens of Gotha.

When she was alone with him she cried, and her 'Angel had great difficulties in comforting'³ her. Her tears were for her friend, Augusta von Studnitz, the eldest daughter of President August von Studnitz, of Gotha. 'Only a few words, my dearly, beloved Augusta, to tell you how much I love you and how much my parting from you affected me. I cried the whole night,' she wrote, when she arrived in the new Dukedom which was to be her home. In the same letter

she told her friend that she was infinitely happy and cheerful, realising every day, 'more and more, that real happiness exists in the love of him to whom one gives one's hand.'

As the Prince and Princess drove along the gaily decked roads to Coburg, all the countryside shared their pleasure. Everywhere they were loaded with wreaths and poems. Although Luise was gay, her eyes sometimes filled with tears. In those moments she looked up to her Prince by her side, and everything mournful gave way to joy. Indeed, there was humour in the day, for in the evening at a concert the national song was 'Hail Duke, Hail Duchess, Soon you will rock Princes in your lap. Then hail to you'; and the little Princess wrote to Augusta: 'Is that not funny? I had to think immediately of the Holy Trinity.'

Of all the great people who waited for her in Coburg, none was so amazing as her mother-in-law, 'a most remarkable woman, with a most powerful, energetic, almost masculine mind, accompanied with great tenderness of heart and extreme love for nature. . . . She had fine and most expressive blue eyes.'⁴ When Luise first saw her, she said she really must be an angel, 'as God had given her such a son.'

The Duchess watched the young people nervously and affectionately from the first day when 'the poor little woman' stepped into the room, so exhausted that she could not talk for crying. The Duchess wrote in her diary: 'It is a charming, tiny being, not beautiful, but very pretty, through grace and vivacity. Every feature of her face has expression; her big blue eyes often look so sad from under her black lashes, and then again, she is a happy wild child. . . . I hope she will still grow, as she is very short. . . . Luise, in her heavy silver-embroidered bridal gown and many jewels, more magnificent than beautiful, the Silver made her look too pale. . . . I had half the town for tea because everybody wanted to congratulate me.'

Among those who greeted Luise, was Victoria Leiningen,

afterwards the Duchess of Kent. Luise thought her 'very beautiful, tall and large, very white, black eyes and hair, she is most charming and natural. She presented me with a most pretty bracelet with her name in diamonds. The little Feodora,^s her daughter, is my whole joy. She jumps with the Aunt Luise, for a wager.'

Luise's letters to her friend in Gotha were those of a child bewildered in a great new house, filled with adventure. She described her rooms, arranged with the loveliest Paris furniture, and the bedroom which was green, 'the most elegant of all. In a recess, stands a big bed with white and green draperies, the frame-work of which is made of bronze. . . . My gold dressing-table, another made of marble, a marble chest-of-drawers.' When she went through the dark, old arches, into the town, she thought the houses were much finer 'than at Gotha, especially the very beautiful market-place. Only the pavement is ugly.'

The town of Coburg, to which she had come, lay at the foot of the hill upon which the mediæval *feste* was built, much as the castle and town of Windsor lie together in the valley of the Thames. The castle was not used,⁶ and the Ducal family divided their time between several immense and ornate palaces in various parts of the country. Schloss Ehrenburg was their house in Coburg. The Rosenau, four miles away, surrounded by forests and beautiful fields, was their small country home.

Luise spoke of the old fortress on the hill looking majestically down on the town, but she spoke mostly of the carnivals and balls and fêtes, which persisted for many days after she arrived. 'Oh! it is too beautiful. It is like being in paradise, and it is also not wanting in an Angel.'

On the fourth day, they went to the Royal Chapel. Luise wrote: 'We heard a bad sermon, which contained nothing but praises of my Prince, with no religious thought. . . . The man is not wrong, only such a thing is not suitable in

Church. Then there was a big dinner at which I appeared in a pink and silver-embroidered dress, with a train.' It was more like the birthday party of a child than a marriage feast.

Prince Ernst took her to the Rosenau, where, in the evening, the gardens were illuminated and there were various diversions. Chinamen danced, and nymphs, appearing from grottoes, presented suitable poetic addresses. When Luise descended the stairs to the ball-room, her way was lined by beautiful children on pedestals, dressed as gods of Love, and scattering flowers. . . . 'The Duke, who sends you his love, is responsible for the torn letter, as he took it out of my hands so quickly.' On the fifth day she was so exhausted that she had to 'spend the whole of the morning in bed, where all my relations came to visit me.'

There was no pleasure she did not share with Augusta through her long letters. 'You will get a fright, precious Augusta,' she wrote from the Rosenau, 'when you receive this letter. . . . You will count the sheets and cry out again, the Gossip! Will she never hold her tongue? I risk all this, and yet the thought gives me great pleasure, to talk and joke with you, to tell you how happy and contented and joyous I am . . . if one loves an Angel, one's master and husband, one is much softer and more tender, more susceptible and warmer also for friendship.'

In the evening, she would sit with Ernst in the garden. She would watch the great clouds, dark, tumbling and changing their shapes, as they drifted towards the distant castle. Her little hand would be curled within the bigger hand of her husband and, sitting thus, they would talk. A calm, mellow moon, the chuckle of the stream, the warm, still night . . . she would sigh and lean closer to him. Even thus beside him, she was lonely and wistful. She needed Augusta, her friend. One night she spoke of her need. She pressed Ernst's hand and said: 'If only Augusta could enjoy

this quiet and beautiful evening with me. With you and her, it would be too lovely.'

Ernst calmed her. 'He thinks you will surely come to me,' she wrote to Augusta. 'Can I hope?'

§ II — 1817

THE ROSENAU was filled with wonders for the child—the library, where 'there are novels about Knights' and, above the pictures, magnificent paintings let into the wall. The window panes of the whole castle were of coloured painted glass, decorated with coats of arms, mostly copies of Albrecht Dürer. Luise's own rooms were her great delight. Her living-room was grey, dark blue and gold, and had beautiful bronze furniture. Her bedroom was dark green. The trellis and poles painted upon the wall had all sorts of coloured convolvulus wound about them. Next to the bedroom was a charming boudoir, sky-blue, with silver stars, where, she wrote to her friend, 'I especially like being and thinking of you.'

'... I always accompany my beloved husband to the chase, which amuses me very much. Every afternoon I go with him to the forest, to hear the tender calling of the stags. If one has never seen or heard such a thing, it is really very extraordinary. They roar and bellow until their wives arrive, then they go away proudly. If another stag arrives, they fight with each other until one dies or succumbs. The wife then follows the conqueror voluntarily. A very bad trait of our sex.'

§ III — 1817

AT THIS time her mother-in-law recorded an event which changed the fortunes of many Princes in England and in Germany. 'The Courier has arrived,' she wrote in her

diary. 'Charlotte is dead!' Good God! I cannot realise the gigantic tragedy. I cannot bear it. Poor, poor Leopold! . . . She is dead, the beautiful, charming, good woman, the hope of a large population over which she would have ruled and whose death ruins the whole life happiness of Leopold. God's ways are wonderful, often terrible. No mortal can understand why this beautiful flower should fade at the morning of her life and drop off without fruit, with which she would have blessed her country.'

A month after the death of the Princess Charlotte, the Duke of Kent held his famous conversation with Creevey⁸ in Brussels, in which he laid down the terms upon which he would be willing to marry, 'for the succession.'

The Duke of Kent had lived faithfully and happily with his mistress, Madame Saint Laurent, for twenty-seven years, 'in all climates and in all difficulties together.' He was essentially a practical man, and a disciplinarian, and his proposal to Creevey was comparatively honourable, when we consider the morality of his time—a time, it was said, when Lord Dartmouth was the only peer in England who said his prayers. If the Duke married for the succession, it meant that he had to give up his personal happiness and to sacrifice the woman who loved him for the cold experiment of marriage to a Princess he did not know. It was possible that he would lose all and gain nothing—unless it were financial benefit from the country.⁹ 'The nation . . . is greatly my debtor,' he said, and it is to his credit that when he married Victoria Marie Luise, the sister of Prince Leopold and Duke Ernst of Saxe-Coburg, and widow of Prince Charles of Leiningen, he was a faithful husband, abandoning his mistress and observing all the laws of domestic decency.

Thus the Duke of Kent again brought Coburg closely into England's story, and, in January of 1819, the Duchess Augusta of Coburg wrote: 'In a few moons perhaps, Victorie becomes the wife of a man she hardly knows. . . . The

English Minister in Stuttgart, Mr. Taylor . . . brings the glad news that the Regent and the Queen of England, as well as the people, desire the marriage of the Duke.' On May 26th she wrote: 'We had hardly sat down at table when his equerry arrived with the news that the Duke would follow in a few hours. . . . We waited with strained curiosity and poor Victorie with beating heart, she had only seen him once. The first moment, Kent was a little shy, however much he is a man of the world, to drop like a bomb into such a large family.' She thought him a good-looking man for his age, and was pleased with the expression of good nature around his mouth. 'His tall figure has something noble and the simple blunt manner of the soldier combined with the delicate good-breeding, make his intercourse very agreeable.'

On May 28th the engagement was announced. Two days afterwards the Duke of Kent stood under the velvet canopy of the Giant's Hall, looking very well in his uniform of an English Field-Marshal, and was married to Victoria, charming in a fair dress, trimmed with white roses and orange-blossom. The thunder of cannon from the fortress announced that the marriage ceremony was over.

Three days later, the newly married pair left Coburg.

Less than a year after this, with the Duke himself on the box of the carriage, the married pair crossed Europe, so that they might be in England when their baby was born. It was said that a gipsy had once told the Duke, on the slopes of Gibraltar, that his daughter would be a great Queen, and it was not conceivable that she should be Queen of any land but England.

Chapter Two

§ 1 — *December 1817*

THE OLD Duke of Saxe-Coburg is seldom mentioned in the letters of this time. His son Leopold has written in his favour that he was amiable and human and that Prince Albert inherited his great love for the fine arts. However, the Ehrenburg Castle in Coburg is too fabulous a caricature of 'English Gothic' to allow us to believe in the old Duke's taste. He was a libertine, and Coburg still tells a story of his own blacksmith raising his hammer against him, when he sought to seduce the man's daughter. It may seem that little purpose is served by recalling such a misfortunate incident in this book. But it is interesting, as showing the violent reaction of Prince Albert against all that was lax in the morality of his family.

When the Duke died, the Dowager Duchess continued her affectionate guardianship of the young Luise and when she celebrated, as reigning Duchess, her seventeenth birthday, she wrote in her diary: 'God grant that she may be as happy and jolly when she celebrates the eighteenth. Her youth and delicate body make me very afraid of her condition for the hour of becoming a mother. . . . Charlotte's loss makes me so despondent . . . the poor thing appears to me only like a lovely vision. . . . I would give my life to ensure the child her happiness, because I love her like a daughter.'

§ 11 — 1818

IN FEBRUARY of the new year, the Duke and Duchess went to Gotha, so there were no letters from Luise to her friend during the time they were together. But on the way home to Coburg, whither they travelled by sledge, the footman upset, and she wrote: 'My Master and Ruler followed his

example and in the end, Mathilde [her lady-in-waiting] kissed Mother Earth. At Schleusingen, the sledge in which the maids were travelling fell into the water, from off the footbridge. Luckily they had both got out, but coats, furs, skirts, scarves, sausages, cakes and a small coffee machine floated on the water.'

They arrived in Coburg safely. Luise complained to her friend that she was alone a great deal, because the Duke devoted himself to the chase. There was no one else to share her days. If she were to talk about the most important things to her Ladies-in-Waiting, they would laugh at her. They could be present during the choice of a new dress but could not share her thoughts.

On June 21st, 'God be praised and thanked. Luise has been successfully delivered of a healthy boy,'¹⁰ wrote the Dowager Duchess.

'I wish my beloved Augusta could see the little child,' Luise wrote; 'it has big eyes, which are till now dark blue, but I am constantly hoping that they will become dark brown. The mouth is small and pretty and the face has a pretty shape. I do not talk about the nose, it is rather ugly. . . . You cannot realise what a strange feeling I have in being a respectable mamma. I love my little child very much, but I cannot realise that it is supposed to belong to me.' A few weeks afterwards she wrote: 'My little child is becoming charming. The other day he held a heavy stick in his hand for a whole quarter of an hour and played with it. That is a great deal for ten weeks, is it not?'

When their baby was a few months old, the Duke and Duchess went on a long journey and everywhere the roads and houses were dressed in gay colours and lights for them. At a place in the forest not far from Saalfeld, they had an excellent dinner in a house completely made of moss and decorated with ornaments of coloured glass pearls; and there was a procession of charcoal burners who recited poems to them.

Luise continued to send childish letters to her friend and confessed that at one dinner party she had laced herself so tightly that she fainted at table and had to go home.

In the next letter, Luise rejoiced because Prince Leopold was with her at Coburg. '... he would surely please you. He is a very famous, big man, very well made, good features, friendly, intelligent and exceedingly kind in conversation, religious, noble and of trustworthy character.' But sorrow at the death of Princess Charlotte still lay deep in Prince Leopold's heart, and expressed itself in his whole manner. He tried to hide it at parties, but his grief burst out with great force at times and drove away the short spells of happiness.

Ernst was very kind to his wife, but he was a man of the hills and forest, and during the day, Luise was left alone with her ladies. They talked, read and worked, but Luise listened anxiously all the time and, in the evening, her heart beat happily when she heard the roll of the carriages and the trample of the horses, and Ernst returning to meet her, affectionate, as always.

§ III — 1819

ON JANUARY 2ND, the Duke celebrated his birthday, and on that day his mother wrote in her diary: 'God's best blessing on this day and over Ernst's whole life! May his pretty blooming boy give him so much joy some day as he gave me. . . . I only see Ernst in the evening, at parties, and Luise is too young to be a compensation to me.'

Later in the year, Luise was distressed because her baby Ernst suffered very much from tooth fever and a cough. 'Frau von Senft bore a girl yesterday,' she wrote. 'If only I had also got over the month of August, and could rejoice in a healthy child. What do you say to my fall, when I tumbled down a whole flight of stairs!'

In May, the baby was very ill. 'One had to put leeches on him twice, but now everything is right again, as the third little tooth has arrived, and the fourth will see the light of day shortly. But in no circumstances can I bring the child with me. You will therefore have to be satisfied with me, and his invisible brother or sister.'

§ IV — 1819

LATE IN August, Luise's carriage rolled out from the town to the Rosenau. The yellow stone castle shone in the sunlight. Near to it were beeches, elms, ashes and oaks. Beyond the park were the high pines of the dark and solemn Thuringian Forest, stretching from state to state. About the Rosenau, the light was bright and the fields were beautiful with meadow saffron and red clover. Petunias, purple and mauve and scarlet, spilled over the edges of the jardinières in the garden, and there were myriads of red berries upon the rowan trees.

The little room in which the Prince was to be born was filled with clumsy copies of *Empire* furniture. When Luise went to the window, she looked out towards the morning sun, which shone upon a waterfall and a river, cool and clear, coming from the forest. Just below, past the fluttering white butterflies, was a fountain, with its cool spouts of water beating down upon the stone. There were geese and storks in the fields. Here also were the harvesters; heavy-hipped women in blue blouses, bringing the hay up on little trollies which squeaked and trundled over the stones. But about the house all was quiet. The gardeners were still as mice; they bent over their roses, but they did not sharpen their scythes and their hoes lay idle upon the ground. The darkened window towards which they looked was framed in leaves and flowers.

The baby was born on August 26th. At six o'clock, a

healthy little boy 'looked at the world with a pair of jolly eyes.' When she could, the little Duchess wrote: '*Albert est superbe, d'une beauté extraordinaire.*'

The Dowager Duchess wrote immediately to the Duchess of Kent in England: 'I am sitting by my Louischen's bed. She was yesterday morning safely and quickly delivered of a little boy.' Siebold, the accoucheuse who had tended Luise, had hurried across Europe from a similar service in Kensington Palace, where she had brought the little Princess Victoria into the world. While she tended the young Prince Albert, she talked of the older child at Kensington and of what a 'dear little love' it was.

The Dowager Duchess continued her letter to England: 'At six, the little one gave his first cry in this world. . . Luise is much more comfortable here than if she had been laid up in town. The quiet of this house, only interrupted by the murmuring of the water, is so agreeable . . . no one considered the noise of the palace at Coburg, the shouts of the children and the rolling of the carriages in the streets.'

When she had recovered, one of the first letters Luise wrote was to Augusta. 'My affectionate thanks for your dear letter. . . . You should see him, he is pretty like an angel, he has big blue eyes, a beautiful nose, quite a small mouth and dimples in his cheeks. He is friendly and he smiles the whole time, and he is so big that a cap which Ernst wore when three months is too small for him, and he is only seven weeks as yet.'

Every day was happy—Albert was christened on September 19th, in the hall at the Rosenau, an ornate chamber of white marble inlaid with gold, with a fireplace of black marble. The lustres were 'genuine bronze from Paris.'

Four months afterwards, the young Duchess celebrated the birthday of her husband with a charming feast. In the Giant's Hall¹¹ a fair was presented, booths were erected, and a party of street singers sang, accompanied by music.

There was a performing bear, and in the ante-room, behind the Giant's Hall, was a marionette theatre, where children represented the marionettes 'very nicely. The whole was very charming, and a ball ended the small successful fête.'¹²

Chapter Three

§ 1 — 1820

ALBERT WAS not strong, but like his brother he was 'quick as a weasel.' He had 'large blue eyes and limpid cheeks . . . very handsome, but too slight for a boy; lively, very funny, all good nature and full of mischief.' Thus his grandmother wrote of him in the letters to her daughter, who was looking upon equally attractive pictures of the little Princess Victoria, growing up in Kensington Palace.

The Duke of Kent inclined affectionately towards the English Princess, and the Georgian soldier became the adoring father; his discipline and piety warmed into something more gentle and human. The Duchess too had settled into the English picture, and the clever, warm-hearted grandmother in Coburg had every reason to feel contented, especially when her imagination played with a thought—an ambition, which led her to write of Albert: 'The little fellow is the pendant to the pretty cousin.'

The Duke of Kent died and the peace of the little family in England was destroyed; his last breath had been a prayer that God might protect his wife and child and forgive all the sins he had committed.¹³ But everybody was happy at Coburg and Luise watched her two children growing—Albert into a very beautiful boy. In England, the baby Princess was surrounded by the anxiety of financial straits, and the Duchess of Kent, who had consented to be an exile because she thought it might bring certainty and quietude, found herself a widow almost as soon as she was a bride, weighed down by her husband's debts and obliged to turn to Coburg, not to England, for the money with which to bring up her child. It was Prince Leopold, her brother, who endowed her so that she might continue to live in Kensington Palace. During the years of George the Third's madness

and the régime of his ignominious son, the little Princess was nursed and educated through the bounty of the Coburgs.

The Dowager Duchess of Coburg sighed because of the unhappiness in England, but the immediate scene was too merry and pleasant to allow her depression to last very long. Albert drove with her in her carriage, saying: 'Albert is going with grand-mamma,' and holding out his hand so that she might kiss it. She thought him 'lovely as a little angel, with his fair curls.' Sometimes he rebelled, 'but a grave face brings the little fellow to submit.' He pored over a picture book of Saxon Princes and 'he made wonderful eyes,' when he discovered 'that one was called Albert, like himself.'

The old Duchess knew her daughter in England very well it seems, for she wrote: 'Don't yet tease your little puss with learning, She is young still.' But the Duchess of Kent was impulsive; she had more intellectual ability than practical wisdom in worldly matters.¹⁴ She made Kensington Palace a grim and frightening place to her new child, as well as to the little half-sister, Feodora Leiningen, who had come from Coburg with her.

Soon after the death of the Duke of Kent, an epidemic of small misfortunes broke out among the Court at Coburg. Luise wrote to her friend: 'The Duke of Kent died suddenly. . . . We lived after that quite alone and became very ill, all of us.' 'To add to it,' she complained, 'the most unpleasant letters arrived from my home. . . . What you wrote me about my mother I am very sorry to hear, but it is nothing new, and I cannot do any more than be patient and let the storms rage and roar, as much as they like. . . . Is it a crime to love one's husband and not want to leave him? I did not care about the gaieties, I only wanted to accompany him.'

§ II — 1820

THE COBURGS were always handsome, but always cold. For

them, wives were mothers and pretty, amorous toys. But friendship with them was always impossible. Luise was a child, impetuous and lively. In the summer, the trees were so green, the flowers so gay and the birds so happy that she danced with joy, while her dour husband tramped through the forest in search of game. Her adoration of Ernst caused her the lonely anxiety which any young and sensitive girl might suffer, married to a man who was passionate without being affectionate, and more in love with the hills and the hunting than the subdued entertainments of the stuffy *Empire* rooms. She was lonely, in the green silk bedroom, with its silver roses.

In July of 1820, Charlotte von Bock, one of her step-mother's Ladies-in-Waiting, was guilty of 'a stupidity out of bounds.' 'You will laugh when you hear it,' Luise wrote to Augusta, 'but it has made me cry. She accused me of loving Count Solms and scolded him because he was in love with me. It made him die of laughter.' Her ladies brought the story to the Duke. 'If he had been sensible, he would have laughed also, but he took it seriously, and was angry with me. We talked about it and the whole ended in tears. . . . Now he watches me, which he has never done before, and he misconstrues everything. . . . How is it possible, dear Augusta . . . that people can thus have such fancies and make such thrusts. . . .'

Later, she wrote: 'Do come for my birthday. . . . Bring everything elegant and pretty you possess with you, especially dance frocks, as we shall do nothing else this winter but dress up and enjoy ourselves.'

§ III — 1822

IN MARCH of 1822, the Duke of Saxe-Gotha went to stay with his daughter in Coburg. 'My father seems to like being here,' Luise wrote to Augusta. 'In the morning he stays in

bed and by my orders he receives visits from all the gentlemen and ladies of the Court.'

Soon after his return to Gotha, he died peacefully in the arms of the Duchess Caroline, after a sick-bed of eleven days. Her father's death was the signal for a sad change in the story of Luise. She was still a child, innocently entranced when, one day, a good-looking, seventeen-year-old boy lay at her feet, and climbed apple trees to look into windows and did a thousand pretty and amorous things which amused her. She was 'raised up to the sky' by these attentions. The child loved being cared for and made a fuss of. While her husband was hunting in the hills and philandering in the valleys, she stayed at home, lulled into a false security by the adoration of all who came near her. Luise was soothed by the attentions of the young Austrian riding-master who 'sighed and languished like a turtle-dove.' But it was an officer of the Coburg Battalion who was to win her love, when Ernst had killed it with his own neglect.

§ IV — 1823-26

THE ENGLISH Victorians made a dark story, full of blame, out of the divorce of the Duchess Luise. The documents,¹⁵ now preserved in the archives in Coburg, show that she was divorced on a charge of having committed adultery with Lieutenant von Hanstein, whom she later married. She neither denied nor admitted the charge against her. While there are people, in Germany and England, willing to whisper malicious stories to her detriment, there exists no fragment of evidence in the letters written by either Luise's enemies or her friends to prove or even suggest that she was unfaithful until the Princes were grown children. The Duke was openly promiscuous, but Luise had remained in love with him for many years, shutting her eyes to his unbecoming escapades. It was a time when Princes enjoyed immunity

from the Ten Commandments. Like the sons of George the Third, many of the German Princes amused themselves as their fancy led them; to them, fidelity was a pretty amusement for those who sat below the salt.

There are several printed documents which state that Luise's infidelity brought semitic blood into the family. An astounding statement was made, in 1921, by Herr Max W. L. Voss. He wrote, in *England als Erzieher*: 'Prince Albert of Coburg, the Prince Consort, is to be described without contradiction as a half Jew, so that, since his time, Jewish blood has been circulating in the veins of the English Royal Family, as well as in the veins of the Hohenzollerns.' While such extravagant statements are in print, the evidence of the letters of the Duchess Luise is of vital importance to the history of the succession. If such accusations had not been published, it would not be necessary to raise the subject here. Mr. Strachey, in his *Queen Victoria*, refers thus to the divorce: 'There were scandals: one of the Court Chamberlains, a charming and cultivated man, of Jewish extraction, was talked of.' Even if Lieutenant von Hanstein had been of Jewish extraction, the letters of Luise, the diaries of her mother-in-law, and the most confidential family letters and papers preserved at Coburg, none of which has been withheld from the biographer by the present Duke, coupled with the fact that the Prince Consort was four years old when these things happened, remove all possible doubt as to his legitimacy and the purity of his blood. The family portraits show that many of the early Coburgs had heavy features and faintly semitic noses; the Prince Consort's grandmother had almost Jewish features.

Duke Ernst was not a pleasant man, in manner or in culture, and when the girlhood infatuation of Luise had faded, her capricious but entrancing nature needed companionship. She made no counter-charge against her husband. She accepted the judgment of the Court and faced the pitiful

moment when she appeared for the last time before the people, with tears in her eyes. 'Don't damn me completely—go on loving me,' she pleaded to her friend. 'I have sacrificed everything, but don't let me also lose your friendship.'

Coburg was suddenly stirred to revolt by the unhappiness of its Duchess. It seems that the blame should be laid at the door of Maximilian von Szymborski, first Adjutant and confidant, who had made himself indispensable to the Duke, with his 'thorough knowledge' of the intrigues of the Court. He seems to have been perfectly cast as the villain in the piece, and Paul von Ebart's book shows us the unfortunate trio—the Duke, petty and mistrustful, insensitive and selfish; Szymborski, ruthless and anxious to improve his own security, and Luise, too young to bear the problems and dissensions which were crushing her. 'I am to separate from the Duke,' she wrote to her friend. '... The Duke was friendly towards me. We came to an understanding and parted with tears, for life. I am more sorry for him than for myself.'

She had gone to Rosenau; Ernst was at another castle a few miles away. The people of Coburg were alarmed at the separation and they rose against Szymborski: as their wrath fell on him, so their adoration was poured upon Luise. They loved her to a degree of worship. The people of the town and the peasants poured out to Rosenau, where everything was peaceful, and as Luise stepped into her carriage, they burst forth through the hedges and railings, cut the ropes and harnessed themselves to draw her into the town. 'The love was most touching, as they were all armed.'

As her carriage whirled through the streets, the women cried. When she came to the castle, where they had besought her to join the Duke again, Luise went out on to the balcony and, as she overlooked the enormous mass of people, she waved her white scarf, her face bathed in tears,

greeting and thanking them. Their delight poured itself into singing 'Now thank we all our God.'

But this was not enough. 'We want to see them together. Let us also fetch the Duke,' the people cried. 'They must be reconciled! We want to have unity and peace again in the dynasty.' The Duke was at Ketschendorf, half an hour away, with Ernst and Albert. The people appealed to him, but he opposed them. At last he consented to go into Coburg and meet the Duchess, but he would not allow them to draw his carriage. He drove himself back to the castle, with his children. It seemed that the Coburgers were to have their desire, for the husband and wife appeared on the balcony together. The townspeople then went home.

Next day, when the story had travelled into the countryside, the farmers and peasants came in, with their flails on their shoulders. Even if the Duke and Duchess were reconciled and happy again, it was not enough for them. They wanted the blood of Szymborski. 'He will be whipped. . . . The wrecker of the country . . . away with the foreigner,' they cried. They rushed wildly into the castle and demanded Szymborski's delivery. They had destroyed his summer-house, they had thrown stones at his son who was riding, and at his wife, standing at the window.¹⁰

Again they went up to the castle and the Duke, dressed in his green coat, fastened up to the neck, and wearing long brown gaiters and a white top hat, came out to them. He stepped before the approaching stream and asserted himself against some who tried to pass him by and enter the castle. He was angry and he harangued the crowd, but they still raged against him. The people swept in from the far away villages and crowded at the foot of the castle. The Duke and Duchess were together, it was true; but they wanted Szymborski. The Duke's temper snapped, and he called on the soldiers to come out against the populace, but 'not one soldier showed himself.' The archers and the fire-brigade

occupied the castle entrances, but still the people would not stay back, and they cried for Szymborski, even when the calm priests of the town stepped out with extended hands and reminded them of peace, and of the word of God.

When the temper of the crowd was roughest, a closed chaise drew up to the gate. The people turned and rushed towards it, but a servant urged them back. The old Duchess was coming out, he said, and they should not disturb her with their clamour. So they withdrew. But when the way was clear, Szymborski sprang into the carriage and drove off towards the frontier. When the Coburgers turned towards the castle again, Ernst threatened them with the Austrian cavalry, if they did not go back to their houses.

But there was no reconciliation between Ernst and Luise: she signed the separation papers and went away. 'Leaving my children was the most painful thing of all . . . they have whooping cough and said "Mamma cries because she has got to go, now, when we are ill." The poor little lambs, God bless them.' This was the last letter to Augusta which has been found. Luise pleaded for understanding from her 'sweet, faithful friend,' with a misery from which she never escaped, in the five years she was yet to live. Herr Florschütz, who was tutor to the Princes, has told us that the lively young Duchess was wanting in the essential qualifications of a mother. She made no attempt to conceal that Prince Albert was her favourite child. He was handsome and bore a strong resemblance to herself. He was, in fact, her pride and glory. Florschütz considered that the influence of this partiality upon the minds of the children might have been most injurious.

§ v

ONCE, IN the early days, when Luise had first come as a bride from Gotha, she had gone with Ernst to the fortress,

where there was a portrait of Duke Johan Casimir, the ancestor of her husband. He had married Princess Anna, a daughter of Prince August of Saxony. Casimir accused his wife of faithlessness, divorced her and had her thrown into prison. She died in a convent at Sonnefeld in 1614. The man who seduced her was imprisoned for forty years. It was in the first year of her marriage, when she was still a child, that Luise saw the painting. She wrote to Augusta: 'I still thought I heard the complaints of the unhappy Anna and saw the blood of the treacherous Lichtenstein flowing. I clutched the Duke's arm, quite frightened, and searched if there was not perhaps a resemblance in his beautiful dark brown eyes to his terrible ancestor. But I do not believe it. Anna was only unhappy because she was faithless. Posterity shall not be able to say that about me.'

Posterity has not been as kind as Luise hoped.

§ VI — 1826-31

LUISE WAS divorced in March of 1826, and seven months afterwards she married Freiherr Alexander von Hanstein, who was later created Count von Polzig.

There are few letters to tell us of her story between this and the day of her death in 1831. Once she pleaded with a friend: 'Speak sometimes with Prince Leopold about me. I would not like him to forget me completely.' And her step-mother wrote to Duke Ernst of the 'sad condition of my poor Luise . . . the thought that her children have quite forgotten her worries her deeply. She wants to know if they talk about her. I told her that it was impossible for them to forget their mother, but they were not told how much she suffered, for that would make them suffer too.'

In March of 1831, Luise went to see Marie Taglioni dancing in Paris. She was thirty years old then. During the performance, she had to be carried out of the theatre in a

fainting condition. She faded gently, and, in August, she dictated her last message to her maid. 'The feeling that my strength is sinking every hour and that perhaps this illness will end only with my death induces me to make one more request to my deeply loved husband.¹⁷ If it is God's wish to call me away in Paris, I wish my body to be taken to Germany, to my husband's estate, in case he intends to live there in future. Should he choose another place, I beg to be taken there. I was happy to have lived by his side, but if death is going to part us, I want my body at least to be near him.'

On the last day of the month, her lady-in-waiting leaned over her. 'Does Your Highness recognise me? Your Highness knows who I am?' she said.

Luise smiled, bowed her head, and then she died.

•

Chapter Four

§ 1 — 1827

AT KENSINGTON, the 'bright pretty little girl of seven'¹⁸ was growing up, self-willed but enchanting. 'I was naturally very passionate, but always most contrite afterwards,'¹⁹ she recollected, when she was older. Even then, her character was as clear-cut as when she was old upon her throne. The child treated servants and the poor with gentle charity, but she could be ruthless with anybody who came near her with authority. When she saw an old man standing beneath a tree, sheltering from the rain, she called one of the servants and said: 'Run to that poor man with an umbrella; he is very old and will catch cold.' This anxiety for the humble is remembered by old courtiers at Windsor, who knew only too well that while she would forgive a servant for drunkenness and dishonesty, her ladies and her gentlemen and her ministers would be rapped across the knuckles for the slightest misdemeanour. The Queen's lenience with her servants often exasperated her court. Lord Edward Clinton used to tell a story of the time when he was Master of the Household. The man who tended the lamps at Windsor was once so drunk that, in descending the stairs, he dropped a lighted lamp and endangered the castle. Lord Edward wrote a report on the offence to the Queen, hoping she would dismiss the man. When the report came back, the Queen had merely added the words 'Poor man' in the margin.

Shop-keeper and beggar were safe at the hands of the child, but a music teacher had to suffer like a Prime Minister. One day at her lesson, her instructor used the word 'must.' She locked the lid of the piano in front of him and assured him that there was no such thing as 'must,' and walked away. It was the same self-will that made her accept Gladstone's resignation 'with a coldness that distressed him,' and then

turn, in her eighty-first year, to choose Lord Rosebery to be her Prime Minister, without consulting her ministers.²⁰

Although the Queen wrote of her 'melancholy childhood,'²¹ Charles Knight makes the Kensington picture very engaging, in his *Passages of a Working Life*. He delighted to walk in Kensington Gardens and 'in such a season, when the sun was scarcely high enough to have dried up the dews of Kensington's green alleys,' he passed along the broad central walk and 'saw a group on the lawn before the Palace which, to my mind, was a vision of exquisite loveliness.

'The Duchess of Kent and her daughter, whose years then numbered eight, are breakfasting in the open air, a single page attending on them at a respectful distance. The matron is looking on with eyes of love, while the fair, soft English face is bright with smiles. The world of fashion is not yet astir.' When she started up from the breakfast table and ran to gather a flower in the parterre, Victoria's merry laugh was as fearless as the notes of the thrush in the groves around her.

Almost every week there were letters from Kensington to Coburg. There were so many things to write about—the first ball of the little Princess, and the day when she sang a song for Thomas Moore. While the Duchess of Kent shielded the child at Kensington and while she read the Coburg letters which told her of the fêtes and prattle in her old home, the last of the Georges was at Windsor. The Duchess shuddered at the accounts of his peccadillos. Little wonder that she brought up Victoria in seclusion, for she 'very wisely considered that the surroundings of a court, and especially of *such* a Court, were not the best possible atmosphere in which to bring up a child.'²²

The Princess's little spurts of temper and self-will were not frequent enough to disturb the prettiness of the picture, but they made the letters to Coburg vastly amusing. Her wilfulness was tempered by a directness and honesty which made it easy to train her. One morning, her tutor asked

the Duchess how the Princess had behaved in the nursery. The Duchess confessed that there had been a storm the day before. But the child interrupted: ' . . . two storms, one at dressing and one at washing.' There were more stories of her walking in the garden, watering the plants, and dividing the contents of the water-pot between the flowers and her own little feet, than there were of her indulging her temper. Indeed, there was an air of piety and gloom about the discipline in which she lived, and only her Uncle Leopold, when he came to stay at Claremont, gave her an uncritical affection. The Duchess was for ever haunted by the bogey of the Hanoverian blood.

§ II — 1825-27

ALBERT WAS left to the care of his Uncle Leopold and his two grandmothers, who adored him. His mother goes out of the narrative as far as facts and letters are concerned, but there were moments in which Albert showed compassion over her story. When he came to England as a suitor, one of the first presents he gave the Queen was a little pin he had received from Luise when he was a child. He never forgot his mother and in later years, when he read the story of the last sad scenes of her life, he was filled with sorrow.²³

The grandmothers vied with each other as to which should show Ernst and Albert the most love and kindness.²⁴ The two Princes had been taken away from the nursery, and Florschütz had come to be their tutor. Albert was four years old, but still 'so young and little,' that he willingly allowed his tutor to carry him up and down stairs. Florschütz was to stay with him for fifteen years. Albert had always disliked nurses, and he was not sorry when he was swept out of Mademoiselle Müller's room.²⁵ He attached himself with all the warmth of his nature to his new instructor, and in his recollections, Florschütz has written of his own 'just and

honest pride' that the friendship endured to the last moment of the Prince's life.²⁶ It seems that Florschütz was a wise and patient man, for both Princes learned much at his hands. Florschütz has told us that the Princes went hand in hand in all things, whether at work or at play. Engaging in the same pursuits, sharing the same joys and the same sorrows, they were bound to each other by no common feelings of mutual love.

But there was a real difference in their dispositions. Ernst was physically active, without imagination, and, although older than Albert, obedient to him in most things. He had all the normal male characteristics, while Albert was fanciful, sympathetic and inclined to self-analysis and sadness. Although he was 'rather delicate than robust,' he was 'remarkable for his powers of perseverance and endurance. . . . To do *something* was with him a necessity.' In his games with his brother and his young companions, his was the directing mind.²⁷

When Albert was six years old, he began a journal.

'1825, 21st January. When I got up this morning, I was very happy; I washed myself, and then was dressed; after which I played for a little while, then the milk was brought, and afterwards dear Papa came to fetch us to breakfast. After breakfast dear Papa showed us the English horses. The little white one can trot very fast, but the chestnut one is rather clumsy.

' . . . Now I am sleepy, I will pray and go to bed.'

23rd January. ' . . . When I woke this morning I was ill. My cough was worse. I was so frightened that I cried. . . . I did a little drawing, then I built a castle and arranged my arms; after that I did my lessons and made a little picture and painted it. Then I played with Noah's Ark. Then we dined, and I went to bed and prayed.'

26th January. ' . . . We recited and I cried because I could not say my repetition, for I had not paid attention. . . . I was

not allowed to play after dinner, because I had cried whilst repeating.'

11th February. 'I was to recite something, but I did not wish to do so; that was not right, naughty! . . .'

28th February. 'I cried at my lesson to-day, because I could not find a verb: and the Rath [his tutor] pinched me to show me what a verb was. And I cried about it. . . .'

4th April. ' . . . After dinner we went with dear Papa to Ketschendorf. There I drank beer and had bread and butter and cheese. . . .'

9th April. ' . . . I got up well and happy. Afterwards I had a fight with my brother.'

10th April. ' . . . I had another fight with my brother: that was not right.'

A little time afterwards, he wrote to his father: 'Our finches have such a fine house to live in. Think of me very often and bring me a doll that nods its head. Your little Albert.'

His frequent tears were part of his shyness. He disliked visits from strangers and at their approach would run to the furthest corner of the room and cover his face with his hands; nor was it possible to make him look up, or speak a word. On one occasion, at a children's fancy dress ball, when he was dressed as Cupid, a little girl was chosen as his partner. Nothing could induce him to stir, and his loud screams went echoing through the rooms.

§ III — 1826-27

GOTHA WAS added to the estates of Coburg in 1826, and in November, Duke Ernst rode into the town with his two sons. After this, instead of living all the time in Coburg, Albert and his tutor went to Gotha for a part of every year. But Rosenau and the palace in the town of Coburg continued to be the true background of his childhood.

Sometimes he went up to the old ruined castle on the hill, along the grey, dusty roads, which wound up between rich trees and meadows. A boy with the blood of soldiers and Princes in his veins must have loved the high fortress, with its old green guns, its lime tree beneath which Luther had sat, its ramparts hung with red creeper and the succession of rooms and halls, imbued with legend. He could stand on the ramparts and look out towards the forest, a black river of trees, flowing over the hills. On one side was a ruined tower, and on the other, a castle. In the summer, it was the loveliest place in Thuringia. The wild pigeons that came from Scandinavia used to fly over the towers, towards the fields in which the harvesters were working. Within the castle was Luther's room, with his table and his Bible and his stained handwriting.

There were birthdays, with parties for a thousand children, eating cake and sausages, playing on the large meadow and jumping about like grasshoppers. Ernst and Albert went in full armour, and their Uncle Leopold stood on a platform to receive them. Ernst stammered forth a short address, in which he thanked his kind uncle for having come across the sea to spend the festival with them.²⁸

Sometimes the Princes went to stay with their grandmother in Gotha; she smiled upon them and found Albert more handsome than ever. He breakfasted with her and she allowed him to go to the opera. 'I have gratified their ardent wish to have another goat,' she wrote, 'which has been sent to-day. I entreat that they may be allowed to keep them all three. . . . Albert wishes to drive the little goat. Happy children! How much are they to be envied for the power of being pleased with so little. . . . Do not let them take much medicine nor hear much about their health; it only makes them nervous.'

The English newspapers came to Coburg and the Dowager Duchess read of the little Victoria going on to Virginia.

Water with the King. 'The little monkey must have pleased and amused him,' we read, 'she is such a pretty, clever child.'

Indeed she had pleased and amused her 'large and gouty'²⁹ Uncle William, who had said: 'Give me your little paw.' Had she not asked for 'God Save the King' as her favourite piece of music, and had she not told him that what she had enjoyed most during her stay was 'the drive I took with you, Uncle King'?³⁰

It was about this time that she asked her nurse: 'Why do all gentlemen raise their hats to me and not to Feodora?' Lehzen, the trusted and obdurate German governess who watched the child so carefully, thought this a suitable moment to let her into the secret. She told Victoria how near she was to the throne. 'I will be good,' Victoria answered. 'Many a child would boast, but they do not know the difficulty. There is much splendour, but more responsibility.' ³¹

Chapter Five

§ 1 — 1828-31

WHEN ALBERT was older, he learned to ride his English ponies up into the forest, where larch, pine and fir trees rose above the myriads of pungent brown and yellow toadstools. The forest was beautiful, with still, gold light between the trees, and wood piles and clearings where little girls gathered mushrooms in baskets. He travelled to the farther corners of Germany and down the green Rhine. He had his own enthusiasms: he collected geological specimens and bent over the desk in his schoolroom, high under the sloping roof of Ehrenburg: he stored up learning with German exactitude. He was more a student than a sportsman. 'I don't understand people making a business of shooting and going out for the whole day,' he said.

As the horizon of his life extended, so his character grew. He overcame his temptation to cry and the childish quarrels with his brother gave place to a friendship which was no less secure for the great difference in their natures. Albert developed a character which was almost too near perfection.

Count Mensdorff wrote of Albert: 'It was only what he thought unjust or dishonest that could make him angry. One day he was playing at the Rosenau with boys of his own age. Some of them were to storm the old ruined tower on the side of the castle, which the others were to defend. One of the boys suggested that there was a place at the back by which they could get in without being seen, and thus capture it without difficulty. But Albert declared that this would be most unbecoming in a Saxon Knight, who should always attack the enemy in front. So they fought for the tower, honestly and vigorously, and the virtuous boy became so lively with the spirit of the battle that he gave his cousin a blow upon the nose.

'Albert never was noisy or wild. . . . He had a natural talent for imitation and a great sense of the ludicrous, either in persons or things: but he was never silly or ill-natured. . . . From his earliest infancy, he was distinguished for perfect moral purity both in word and in deed. . . . Whilst still very young, his heart was feelingly alive to the sufferings of the poor. I saw him one day give a beggar something by stealth, when he told me not to speak of it; "for when you give to the poor," he said, "you must see that nobody knows of it."' But there was humour to brighten his story and when he acted proverbs, 'There was a good deal of fun and laughter. . . . Albert as a quack, with a pigtail and paunch was too ridiculous.'

Florschütz recalled Albert's love of fun and practical jokes. On one occasion he was scolded by his father for 'getting his instructor in chemistry to fill a number of small glass vessels, about the size of a pea, with sulphurated hydrogen, which he threw about the floor of the pit and boxes of the theatre, to the great annoyance and discomfiture of the audience, at whose confusion he was highly delighted.'³²

Albert frequently turned from a prank or a humorous occasion: he would straighten his Lutheran spine and frown upon the misdemeanours of his contemporaries. When he was but ten years old, he wrote of his sadness that the world should be governed with so little morality. He seemed to escape his childhood. When he was six, he raised the funds to rebuild the house of a poor man who had lost his possessions in a fire. When he was ten, he was sitting in a beer garden with his brother, when the waiter caught his wig on the branch of a tree. Everybody laughed: everybody but Albert, who stood up and denounced the other boys from the gymnasium for their cruelty.³³

Albert's grandmother still lived in her castle, ageing, but lively in her interest in everything that happened in Coburg and Kensington. The busy weekly letters were still ex-

changed, and slowly, year by year, the little Court of Coburg and the lonely Duchess, with her baby Princess, at Kensington, came so near together that they were almost one. 'God bless the Duke of Wellington,' the old Duchess of Coburg wrote to her daughter. 'In spite of your prudence, my dear, I must speak of politics—namely that which now interests me—the emancipation!' The young Princes and Herr Florschütz were coming to dinner with her. Ernst had 'very fine brown eyes, white teeth and a fair rosy complexion.' Albert was 'very good looking, very clever, but not so strong as his brother.'

It was about this time that Albert made his first gesture towards his future bride. He wrote a letter in which he sent his 'best remembrances to our dear Cousin.'

§ II — 1831

TOWARDS THE end of 1831, the Dowager Duchess died in Coburg, and her lively and intelligent help were withdrawn from Albert's life. His Uncle Leopold had also gone away, to add fresh lustre to the Coburg story. By this time, his talents had impressed all Europe. He had refused the Crown of Greece. But the new Kingdom of Belgium presented more scope for power. So he had accepted the Belgian Crown and was now living in Brussels. Albert was left to his father and his tutor. Florschütz was a conscientious and affectionate man and his recollections show us that he gave those years of his life to the improvement in body and mind of his Prince—to his 'advance in health, usefulness and goodness.' Usefulness and goodness came to him easily, but his health sometimes made his tutor nervous. 'I shall never forget,' he says, 'the gentle goodness, the affectionate patience he showed when suffering under slight feverish attacks. His heart seemed then to open to the whole world. . . . He displayed a temper and disposition which I may

characterise as being, in thought and in deed, perfectly angelic. I cannot recall these recollections, even now, without the deepest emotion.'

§ III — 1831-35

HIS FATHER fades slowly out of the Prince's story. He was married again, to the Princess Mary of Wurtemberg, but there was no romance in the marriage, for they lived apart for a great deal of the time, and in reading the correspondence of these years, it seems that Albert was denied the more intimate and gentle influences of a mother or a devoted father. There were frequent misunderstandings between the Duchess and her step-child. Albert's own mother had erred on the side of affectionate leniency, but his step-mother upbraided him for inconstancy. 'You think of me no more, you do not love me properly and you do not consider my advice as being well-intentioned,' she wrote to him, and he pleaded in answer: 'This doubt of our enormous love for you, and our gratitude, downright affection and care, cannot do otherwise than disturb us. . . . I do not know how we can possibly have earned this.'³⁴ Yet she did not even attend the Confirmation of the two Princes, in 1835, and a contemporary account tells us that 'she could not venture on the journey from Gotha to Coburg at this inclement season.'³⁵

After his grandmother's death, Albert became the child of three foster-fathers, his Uncle Leopold, Florschütz his tutor, and Baron Stockmar.

Stockmar had been a doctor in Coburg, where he was born. His son tells us that he had a 'straightforward understanding . . . a sober habit of observation . . . he united deep feeling, good nature, and love of mankind.'³⁶ But he had clear-cut opinions and beliefs and the diligence and imagination to work for those beliefs with tremendous zeal. Indeed, although so many contemporaries wrote of 'The Dear Baron,'

and of the pious unselfishness which inspired him, there is no doubt that he sacrificed many ethical misgivings for the success of his cause. He believed in One United Germany. He was the friend of Kings—the contributor to the greatness of others. ‘I seem to be here, to care more for others than for myself, and am well content with this destiny,’ he wrote to his sister Caroline. His zeal was sometimes overpowering, and it was tempered only by his ill health. ‘It is good that you are so often ill,’ said an old friend; ‘or there would be no bearing your exuberant spirits.’

His friend, King Leopold, was handsome, with charming manners and wide and varied talents. He was a statesman, with enough vision and imagination to contemplate the affairs of all Europe. There was a moment in his life when he was able to pick and choose between thrones. He had the ruling genius which had burst into flower in the Coburgs, in fullest measure. He was able to say ‘No’ to the throne of Greece, and, when he said ‘Yes’ to the Crown of Belgium, he wore it with exalted dignity and to the good of every cause in which he interested himself. But he had not escaped the amorous habits of the Coburgs and, although English historians have painted him as a virtuous husband, his life was enlivened by many indiscretions. While his father had recognised no social barriers in his unmoral amusements, Leopold was more selective in his choice of mistresses and thus his good name was shielded from assault.

Caroline Bauer’s Memoirs show him in anything but a virtuous light, and Count Corti tells us that during the late eighteen-twenties, when Leopold was attached to Caroline Bauer, who was ‘a beautiful German actress,’ she followed him to England. The Belgian King, then Prince Leopold, ‘is believed to have contemplated a morganatic marriage.’³⁷ But he never married Caroline Bauer, for such an alliance would have destroyed his career.

Leopold and Stockmar were bound together by mutual

interests. They saw in the decayed morale and indignity of the Georges, an opportunity to spread the power of the Coburgs. The Hanoverian power in England had fallen into ignominy: thus another throne might be drawn into the net of the family. Leopold and Stockmar trusted each other: their friendship had been sealed in a promise, willingly shared, at the deathbed of Princess Charlotte, the young wife of Prince Leopold and heir to the throne of England. Leopold had loved the impetuous Princess and she no doubt loved him. The death which robbed the English throne of its heiress left Leopold stricken with a sorrow which persisted until the end of his life. Stockmar was with him . . . indeed, he carried the news to the Prince, and together they 'went to the chamber of death; kneeling by her bed, he kissed her cold hands, and then raising himself up, he pressed me to him and said: "I am now quite desolate. Promise me always to stay with me".'

Stockmar made the promise and kept it, although he was obliged to desert his own wife and children in Coburg for the greater part of every year to stay with his master. Leopold had lost his one chance of ruling England as the Consort of his Queen. The next best thing was to train another Prince of Coburg to take his place. He did not scruple to advance the fortunes of his family, at all costs. Leopold was a Napoleon in his desire for conquest, but he was too subtle to take off his gloves in the presence of his competitors. In Stockmar, he had his greatest ally. Stockmar was a servant—he prepared the table and turned on the lights that Princes might play chess. He was content to serve their victory and their pleasure. He was a scholar too and his triumphs were in his own mind. He did not covet his master's glory. Leopold and Stockmar were perfectly paired.

These were the two men, with no shadows of doubt, mistrust or jealousy in their friendship, who joined with

Florschütz to design Prince Albert's future. They were ambitious for him and they were fond of him, but they were ambitious for the glory of the Coburgs rather than for the personal happiness of Albert. He did not enjoy the tenderness which family love would have added to his contentment. Leopold and Stockmar took him as an impressionable boy in his teens and made of him the most virtuous and unselfish Prince of his century. Almost every action, every self-discipline which combined to make the Prince Consort, as the Victorians knew him, was moulded by the educational strait-jacket which these three men had forced upon him. From the beginning, the more sensitive side of his character remained a secret to himself. In later years, music was perhaps the one door through which the boy dreamer escaped, to play.

§ IV — 1835

ABOUT THIS time, his Uncle Leopold wrote: 'Albert is a fine young fellow, well grown for his age, with agreeable and valuable qualities; and who, if things go well, may, in a few years, turn out a strong, handsome man, of a kindly, simple, yet dignified demeanour. Externally, therefore, he possesses all that pleases the sex, and at all times and in all countries must please. It may prove, too, a lucky circumstance, that even now he has something of an English look.'²⁸

Leopold's next concern was Albert's mind. He wrote: 'On this point, too, one hears much to his credit. . . . He is said to be circumspect, discreet, and even now cautious. But all this is not enough. He ought to have not merely great ability, but a right ambition, and great force of will as well.'

Leopold was almost merciless in showing the Prince his line of duty. He demanded an 'earnest frame of mind, which is ready of its own accord to sacrifice mere pleasure to real usefulness.'²⁹ And of the English plan he wrote: 'If he does

not, from the very outset, accept it as a vocation of grave responsibility, on the efficient fulfilment of which his honour and happiness depend, there is small likelihood of his succeeding.'

Leopold had already planned the fate of the Princess at Kensington. He thought many Englishmen to be 'humbugs and deceivers,' and he warned her against hypocrisy, 'a besetting sin of all times.' He urged her to 'self-examination . . . every evening to recapitulate the events of the day and the motives which made one act oneself, as well as to try to guess what might have been the motives of others.' He warned her against selfishness and vanity. 'Nothing is so great and clear a proof of unfitness for great and noble occasions,' he wrote, 'than a mind which is seriously occupied with trifles.'

•

Chapter Six

§ 1 — 1835

THE COURT of Coburg was more pious than religious. Religion must have been instinct in Prince Albert, for his devout life was guided by a spirituality which was not connected with the formal piety in which he was trained. No experience could have been less in tune with personal religion than the scene of his Confirmation. The forbidding examination was conducted in the presence of relatives and all heads of departments, as well as deputations from the diet, the clergy, the towns and villages. The long passages of the castle, with their calm Cranach portraits of the boy's ancestors, the marble ante-room and the Giant's Hall, with its gilt and crimson, were packed with these older, grim people, pricking up their ears to catch the nervous answers Albert made to the examiner. It was a brutal way for any boy to approach a religious life. The questions put by the examiner 'were carefully considered, in order to give the audience a clear insight into the views and feelings of the young Princes.'⁴⁰ We are told that all present were deeply moved by Ernst's answer: 'I and my brother are firmly resolved ever to remain faithful to the acknowledged truth.'⁴¹ The examination lasted for an hour, and when Albert stepped down from the altar, he had the curious satisfaction of knowing that the most personal religious experience of his life had been seen and approved by representatives of every class of people. The Coburgers celebrated the occasion by placing a diamond ring on Florschütz's finger, and we have the tutor's assurance that the Prince had 'a real and living faith, giving colour to his whole life'—that religion was 'part of *himself*. It was engrafted in his very nature.'

But Albert's nature helped him to escape the ill effects of the public forms and uninspired piety which surrounded

him, and the devout and quiet religion of his later life was of a kind which the examiner, the Government officials, the approving aunts and uncles and his unimaginative father could never comprehend.

Victoria's Confirmation in England had not been so formal. She had been led up to the altar by the King. Her mother had wept, the King had 'frequently shed tears,' and the 'little Princess was drowned in tears and frightened to death.'⁴²

§ II — 1836

IN 1836, Albert went to Brussels to live under his Uncle Leopold's supervision. It was then that he ceased to belong to Coburg. When he went to Belgium, his horizon spread far beyond the dark forest and the high grey fortress of Coburg.

Albert had just finished an essay on the *Mode of Thought of the Germans*. He was busy writing letters to the Director of the High School at Coburg and there is no hint of pleasure or play in them. 'I intend immediately to study and to follow the thoughts of the great Klopstock, into their depths,' he wrote. 'I often think back, with the greatest pleasure, of the interesting hours spent with you at Coburg; with what pleasure my ear took in your praises of our German masters.'

His uncle had married again—a Princess who was extremely gentle and amiable, whose actions were always guided by her principles. He thought her 'a very great prize' and 'an example for all young ladies, being Princesses or not.'⁴³

§ III

IN ENGLAND, the Duchess of Kent was still shielding her daughter from her uncles. She was not content with the

making of a Queen—she was brave enough to try to create a new dynasty. She also wished to see the Coburg power envelop the English throne. She almost ignored the existence of William the Fourth, for, like Stockmar, she thought him 'in no way distinguished, either in character or intelligence.' She was bent on establishing a relationship between her child and the English people, irrespective of comments or wishes that might be expressed at Windsor.

The Duchess was relentless in the pursuit of her ambition. When the child showed an inclination to bend her head at the table, she pinned a sprig of holly to the neck of her dress, so that if the chin did relax, it would be pricked and punished.⁴⁴ There was something very much akin between the Duchess, her brother on the Belgian throne, and Stockmar, the King-maker. She saw to it that when she sailed on the Solent, men-of-war should give her a royal salute. The King was so angry with 'that woman' that he forbade the firing of royal salutes except for himself and for his Queen.

His resentment 'culminated in a painful scene, in 1836 . . . ' At a State banquet at Windsor, he made a speech 'of a preposterous character; speaking of the Duchess who sate next to him, as "that person," hinting that she was surrounded with evil advisers and adding that he should insist on the Princess being more at Court. The Princess burst into tears and her mother sate in silence. When the banquet was over, the Duchess ordered her carriage and was with difficulty prevailed upon to remain at Windsor for the night.'

When the discreet Leopold dined at the Castle, the King upbraided him for drinking water. 'God damn it, Sir, why don't you drink wine? I never allow anybody to drink water at my table.'⁴⁵

§ IV — 1836

KING LEOPOLD had established the new throne in Belgium

and the people prospered under his liberal rule. When he had set his own house in order, he was able to look beyond his kingdom. In England, his sister and her Princess were awakening the affections of the people, in spite of the antagonism of the King. In Coburg, Stockmar and Florschütz had fallen in with his plans, and they had trained Albert so that he was almost ready to sit beside the English Princess upon the throne which was promised her. There was no end to Leopold's ambitions, just as there were few limits to his talents. Whatever his motives, and however far vanity and selfishness inspired his hand, Leopold must be thanked a little for the three generations of rulers who have lifted the English crown out of the Georgian mire and held it up, renewed and splendid, before the people.

Leopold may have known a romantic moment when he married Princess Charlotte and a terrible moment when she died, but he was a harder man now, and although he was a foster-father to both Victoria and Albert, this office was never allowed to interfere with the vast public duty which was to be the reason for their existence. He moved the pieces on the chess board kindly, but the thought that human hearts might beat inside them was secondary with him. The plan for the marriage had been so long in growing, and he had tended it so carefully that it could not fail. He knew this when he suggested that Albert should come to England to meet the Princess, in 1836.

Stockmar was more cautious. He knew that Victoria was capricious, so he asked that, if Albert went to England, the object of his visit should be kept from her, 'so as to leave them completely at their ease.' He was more certain of Albert's obedience: the boy would not regret a freedom he had never known. Albert consented to his uncle's plan and he came to London in June of 1836.

Six Princes had already sought Victoria's hand. Creevey had watched her dancing with the young King of Portugal

and the old gossip had noted that the King was never so happy as when talking to his cousin. Then he had added: 'What would I give to hear of their elopement in a *cab!*'

Albert sailed down the Rhine, carrying his English grammar book with him, and improving his conversation by talking to any stray Englishman he met. He arrived in England, in June, together with his father and his brother. The King was rampant. He vowed that the Saxe-Coburgs should never put foot in the country, that they should go back whence they came, and, as a gesture, he invited the Prince of Orange and his two sons to come to London at the same time. William the Fourth was unwise to pit his wits against those of the King of the Belgians. Leopold had already wooed his niece's sympathy in a clever letter. Had not slavery been abolished in the British colonies? Why should the King keep her, 'a white little slavey, for the pleasure of the Court,' when he had never 'spent a sixpence' for her existence.⁴⁶

The Princes came. Albert was seventeen and the fairest Prince in Europe. His voice was quiet, with wisdom and resignation. Victoria found her cousins to be most delightful young people . . . 'very amiable, very kind and good, and extremely merry, just as young people should be.' Up to now, she had known few equals of her own age. Her half-sister was already married to Prince Hohenlohe and living in Germany. Victoria was delighted, but she could not forget that duty had inspired this meeting and that if romance should awaken, it would be no more than a happy accident. Perhaps she thought of this, for after she had called them *merry*, she added that they were 'extremely sensible and very fond of occupation.' They sat on the sofa and turned over the pages of a book of drawings, they danced and walked together, and they displayed their talents upon the pianoforte. She decided that Albert was 'extremely handsome, which Ernst certainly is not.' She wrote jolly letters to

her uncle and she confided in him that she was in every way delighted with the prospect of great happiness in the person of *dear Albert*. 'Allow me then, my dearest Uncle, to tell you how delighted I am with him and how much I like him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be desired to make me perfectly happy.'

There was no courtship yet. The two children must have been very terrified, sitting upon a sofa, conscious that some day they would survive these older people who were planning their lives, and take upon themselves a duty which was nothing short of colossal.

It was not easy for Albert to show emotion. Aloofness enveloped the dreamy boy who had pasted pictures upon the walls of the summerhouse in the Rosenau garden. Flor-schütz and Leopold and Stockmar had given him an armour in which he was unbending. His person was singularly handsome⁴⁷ and his manners were perfect. He had not been brought up to expect love or romance: he was affectionate, grateful and contented, but seldom more than this.

Victoria was different. With all her mother's discipline and her uncle's advice, she was half a Georgian and she loved life; she loved dancing and entertainments and the colour of existence. To the end of her days, she kept the Ten Commandments with zeal, chiefly because, from her infancy, she had been taught that discipline must forever be the master of instinct. The strait-jacket of the schoolroom was still on her when Albert came to her in the name of duty. But this did not prevent her from seeing in him a Prince as fair as any in a story book.

Victoria was not pretty, but she was distinctly attractive, with a small fair head well set on pretty shoulders.⁴⁸ She had the charms of a bright smile and a clear musical voice. It was through her voice that the pleasure-loving Georgian expressed itself so deliciously. Her laugh was rippling and joyous to the end.

Victoria had done her best to entertain Albert. He had yawned at night, because he never could stay up late without feeling sleepy. He had found the King's levée long and fatiguing, and it was a little tiresome having to stay up until two o'clock, for the concert, after he had dined at Court. 'You can well imagine,' he wrote to his step-mother, 'that I had many hard battles to fight against sleepiness during these late entertainments.'

He was grateful, even if his natural aloofness made it impossible for him to be more. For her part, Victoria was almost in love. On the last morning, before they went away, she came downstairs to find Albert playing the piano, before breakfast. Already, of the two brothers, it was Albert who amused and pleased her most. He was the more reflecting of the two. He always had a joke to make her laugh—some clever, witty answer. But on this last morning she did not laugh: she 'cried bitterly, very bitterly.' She wrote to Leopold: 'I have only now to beg you, my dearest Uncle, to take care of the health of one now so dear to me and to take him under your special protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject now of so much importance to me.'

Albert did not say more than that he thought Victoria 'very amiable.'

•

Chapter Seven

§ 1 — 1836-37

FOR ALMOST a year after their visit to England, the Princes stayed with Leopold in Brussels. Diligent study, modern languages and history filled the ten months before they went to Bonn.

Albert would make expeditions away from his books to shoot sea-gulls, or to watch field-days with his uncle. But he was afraid of leisure. When his father summoned him to Coburg for Christmas, he answered: '... I am afraid we must deny ourselves that pleasure. Such an expedition would require five or six weeks and our course of study would be quite disturbed. ...'

At Kensington, Princess Victoria paused to remember the dreariness of her own discipline and when she wrote to her uncle of her 'good cousins,' she hinted that he might encourage them to take more exercise and not to study too much. She was more independent now and she was enjoying the freedom of her escape. She was very fond of pleasant society; her letters were full of wistful longing for gaiety.

The position of the Duchess of Kent had become a little sad. She had devoted the past seventeen years of her life to one great object. She had worked hand in glove with her brother Leopold to establish a Coburg dynasty on the English throne and, fighting against every power in England, she had almost achieved her ambition. But she worked also for her own destruction. William the Fourth, who disliked everything to do with the Coburgs, especially the ambitions of Leopold, had offered Princess Victoria ten thousand pounds a year, independent of her mother. The offer was accepted, and although the King died before the arrangement could affect their relationships, the Duchess

was vexed by this sign of her daughter's freedom. It must be said in defence of the King, that she had done everything to anger him, but it is futile to seek for the wronged person in these relationships between many of the Princes and Princesses of pre-Victorian days. Their manners and their morals were crude. Their great personal service in history is to provide a contrast for Queen Victoria's achievement, in restoring morality and good manners to favour in English society.

'The Georges died,
No one cried.
General jubilation!
Victoria reigned
And regained
Virtue for the nation.'

Much has been written about the relationship between the Queen and her mother at the time of the accession. It seems certain that the Duchess was unwise in choosing her advisers. The Irishman, Conroy, was not a very desirable man. Reflecting upon these matters, just before he died, Prince Albert wrote: 'Mama here would never have fallen into the hands of Conroy if Uncle Leopold had taken the trouble to guide her.' It must be remembered that the morals of the German Courts, to which the Duchess had been accustomed, were so lax that she had never been trained to view these matters strictly. The fault was not so much in her as in her generation. Conversely, Prince Albert developed in spite of his inheritance rather than because of it. Princess Victoria could recall few virtuous ancestors. The irreproachable lives of Albert and Victoria are therefore all the more remarkable, for with them, virtue was an instinct but not an inheritance. Princess Victoria knew these things, and when she came of age she sat in judgment upon her mother's mistakes and enjoyed every possible escape from her discipline.

Leopold and Stockmar watched her progress. They made a strong combination; the King was secure in Brussels and able to watch affairs in South Germany and in England. Stockmar was always at hand to carry the advice which was best not written, either to Coburg or Kensington. Their position was so strong that they could ignore William the Fourth and assume the rôle of King-makers to the throne of England.

Now that the Princess was older, Leopold arranged that Stockmar should spend a great deal of his time in England. Nothing was to be left to chance. 'You have now the Baron at your elbow,' Leopold wrote to Victoria. '*Speak sometimes with him; it is necessary to accustom you to the thing.*' Almost every move that she made was advised or ordered by one of these two men. 'Keep your mind *cool and easy: be not alarmed* at the prospect of becoming, perhaps sooner than you expected, Queen.' When Leopold had written this, he added his thankfulness that Stockmar would be at hand, and his '*judgment, heart and character* offer all the guarantee we can wish for.' He wrote, a little naively: 'My object is that you should be no one's tool.'⁴⁹

Leopold anticipated William's death with explicit instructions, giving Victoria self-confidence, throwing her upon the help and trust of Lord Melbourne and assuring her that the Duke of Cumberland, her immediate successor, was 'enough to frighten them [the Ministers] into the most violent attachment for you.'⁵⁰

§ II — 1836-37

STOCKMAR THOUGHT long and enquired far before he recommended Bonn for Albert's further education. He dismissed Berlin as a school in which he might become 'formal and priggish.' Albert enjoyed more human freedom during the year and a half at the University. He mimicked his professors

and caricatured his tutors, and although he 'liked above all things, to discuss questions of public law and metaphysics,' and although when he walked with his friend, Prince William of Löwenstein, 'juridical principles or philosophical doctrines were thoroughly discussed,' he did unbend in his mimicries, his memory enabling him to produce whole sentences out of the professors' lectures, to the general amusement of the company. But Prince Löwenstein, who recorded these stories, added that the Prince's good taste prevented him from ever giving offence.

There is a contemporary record of the Princes at Bonn which must be mentioned here. An ingratiating Englishman, who was in Bonn at the same time as the Princes, wrote a book on the university, signing himself 'A Member of the Middle Temple.' He makes us almost dislike Albert, when he describes his 'costly banquets to parties of between twenty and thirty students, selected entirely for their personal worth and talents.' He adds: 'The Princes themselves could hardly be said to partake of the rare luxuries provided for the occasion, so rigidly temperate were they both, and more especially Prince Albert.' One only hopes that the Member of the Middle Temple was misinformed and that Prince Albert drank glass for glass with his guests. The same writer states, 'that no prince that has ever lived could stand less in need of exhortations to good deeds, or of admonitions against bad ones than Prince Albert.'

His intellectual weapons were sharp. In fencing and the practice of broad-sword, he was skilful, and when he walked, two fine greyhounds followed in his shadow. He lived with Ernst, in a house near the Cathedral. Florschütz was still with them, approving of the boys' progress. One cannot tell how much Albert dreamed, behind this wall of learning. His tutors gave no inkling of his dreaming in their letters, except when they wrote of his music and of the talent he had already shown as a composer.

§ III — 1837

IN JUNE of 1837, William the Fourth died and Victoria ascended the throne. She had come into the room at five o'clock in the morning, 'in a loose white nightgown and shawl, her nightcap thrown off, and her hair falling upon her shoulders . . . tears in her eyes, but perfectly collected and dignified,' to be told that she was Queen of England.

It was the occasion for Prince Albert to write his first letter in English. He commented on his 'poor Aunt Kent,' who had been violently attacked in the newspapers. 'Now you are Queen of the mightiest land of Europe,' he wrote. 'In your hand lies the happiness of millions. . . . I hope that your reign may be long, happy and glorious. . . . May I pray to you to think likewise sometimes of your cousins in Bonn and to continue to them that kindness you favoured them with till now. Be assured that our minds are always with you. I will not be indiscreet and abuse your time. Believe me always, Your Majesty's most obedient and faithful servant, Albert.'

§ IV — 1837

DURING THE autumn of 1837, Albert and Ernst travelled through Switzerland and northern Italy: their boyhood was over. Very soon, Ernst was to go about his business and prepare for the day when he would be Duke of Saxe-Coburg. Albert turned his thoughts towards England: he sent the young Queen little presents, an autograph of Voltaire, an alpine rose.

But he was unhappy. He talked again and again of the coming separation from Ernst. Albert was fond of his brother, although in character they were as poles apart.⁵¹ While they were at Bonn and while they travelled together

in Switzerland and Italy, Albert and Ernst were bound together by a lively sympathy and friendship and Albert suffered real agony because of the coming separation. The moment 'in its saddest form' was ever before him, he wrote to Löwenstein. 'I shall not set out until Ernst also launches his vessel, so that he may not be left behind. The separation will be frightfully painful to us. Up to this moment, we have never, as far as we can recollect, been a single day away from each other. I cannot bear to think of this moment.⁵² . . . I must now give up the custom of saying "We" and use the "I" which sounds so egotistical and cold.'

§ V — 1838

VICTORIA WAS Queen. Her sudden firmness was surprising and almost terrible. It was inevitable that she should be ruthless and place small sentimentalities on one side in establishing her new position. She drew her 'dearly beloved, angelic Leizen' and her 'excellent Lord Melbourne' about her. Lord Melbourne was a man of the world, charming and clever, and embittered by his experience of women. He found himself confronted by a young girl, eager and virtuous, willing to believe in him and willing to respect him. In that lay the key to their relationship. Victoria came to the throne at a time when Melbourne was depressed by his own folly. She gave him back his self-respect, when she accepted him as her guide and her friend. In private he was like a father. She was fortunate because there was also the Duke of Wellington, wise and unselfish, to be 'very dear and nice' to her. When Lord Melbourne asked her if she had a preference for any individual in England, she had answered: 'There is but one person . . . and that is the Duke of Wellington.'⁵³

Victoria did not allow her new position to cloud her

affection for the sad Queen Adelaide. When somebody pointed out to her that she must now put *Dowager* upon the envelope when she wrote to her aunt, she said: 'Oh, no! I am not going to be the first to remind her.'

The extraordinary change in this first year of her reign was in Victoria's attitude towards her Uncle Leopold and her mother. She failed neither of them as far as her affection was concerned: she knew that their plans had placed her where she was. But the Coburg powers had been poured so fully into her that she brooked no further interference. With her mother, Victoria was gentle but firm; she was given her own rooms in the palace and, in later years, she had a separate house at Windsor and at Balmoral. The young Queen was no less adamant in dealing with her uncle. Her letters to him were affectionate, but she explained, with nice tact, that she would not touch 'on certain matters,' because she did not want to change their present delightful and familiar correspondence into a formal and stiff discussion upon politics.⁵⁴

There was resolution behind her grace. Perhaps she realised now that her uncle had worked as much for Coburg's name as for her own happiness. She was a Queen and Melbourne and the Duke were beside her, giving her their support and affection with a whole-hearted desire to contribute to her glory more than to their own. She was independent and powerful. The reasons why she should marry were lessened now. A Consort was a person of doubtful powers: she could share her authority with her Ministers, only as much as she chose. She was jealous of her independence. The sentimental little scene with Albert on the sofa at Kensington was forgotten. 'Though all the reports of Albert are most favourable and though I have little doubt I shall like him,' she wrote to Leopold, 'still one can never answer beforehand for *feelings*, and I may not have the *feeling* for him which is requisite to ensure happiness. I *may* like him as

a friend, and as a *cousin*, and as a *brother*, but not *more*; and should this be the case (which is unlikely) I am *very* anxious that it should be understood that I am *not* guilty of any breach of promise, for *I never gave any*.⁵⁵

The cousins were coming to England and Victoria wanted to be quite certain that Albert knew that there was no engagement between them.⁵⁶ There had grown up in her a 'great repugnance to change' her position. Freedom was a new and exciting experience, in spite of its responsibilities. She felt too that there was no anxiety in England 'for such an event,' and she thought it more prudent to wait 'till some such demonstration' was shown.

The Queen was naturally gay. She danced 'till past three and was much amused.' After such a night, she wrote to Lord Melbourne that she was ashamed 'of sleeping from four till half past ten.' On her birthday, she danced till four. 'How different to last year! Everybody was so kind and so friendly to me.'

Albert was already careful and independent in his attitude towards the English plan. When he was told that it would be necessary to postpone the marriage for a few years, he had answered: 'I am ready to submit to this delay, if I have only some certain assurance to go upon. But if after waiting, perhaps for three years, I should find that the Queen no longer desired the marriage, it would place me in a ridiculous position and would, to a certain extent, ruin all my prospects for the future.'⁵⁷ Perhaps his pride was hurt by her attitude. Before Victoria came to the throne, they had exchanged affectionate letters, but from the day of her Coronation, she had not written to him again.⁵⁸

Albert was in Rome, reluctant to go 'into the vortex of society.' He 'danced, dined, supped, paid compliments,' and urged his friend Löwenstein to admire his strength of character in that he never excused himself and never returned home till five in the morning. 'I have fairly drained the

Carnival cup to the dregs,' he added. But the carnival jarred against his nature. It was only when he walked away, alone, that he 'became at once gay and animated.' 'Now I can breathe, now I am happy!' he said.

In Florence, he went to the Church of the Badia and there, alone, he played the organ, the music penetrating 'the solemn stillness of the Church and cloisters.'⁵⁸ Perhaps he would have liked to have been one of the recluses walking there.

§ VI

STOCKMAR WAS with Albert in Italy and he observed him closely. The old doctor recalled the Duchess Luise. He recalled the sad, pretty face and said that Albert bore 'a striking resemblance to his mother.' This was not all. The likeness was 'both physical and mental.' In Albert he saw 'the same nobility and readiness of mind, the same intelligence, the same over-ruling desire and talent for appearing kind and amiable to others.' But according to the Baron, Albert was lazy, and he grieved over the boy's tendency to spare himself, both mentally and physically. Albert showed not the slightest interest in politics or women. 'On the whole,' Stockmar complained, 'he will always have more success with men than with women, in whose society he shows too little emprossement, and is too indifferent and retiring.'

While Leopold and Stockmar nursed their plan and while the young Queen was managing her own affairs so spectacularly in England, Albert found the one outlet for his feelings in his letters to his brother. He walked along the road between the Rosenau and the town. He climbed the hill to the castle: he watched the changing colours in the fields. He wrote to Ernst: 'You cannot imagine how empty it seems to me since you left.' He had been forced into the drawing-rooms of his neighbours. But, when they peered at him and congratulated him, he felt a lump in his throat and it was

only with difficulty that he could hide his tears. 'It is the first separation; it will not be the last. But I console myself with the old saying, there must be a valley between two hills. . . . Do take care of your health.' Then he tied a ribbon about his brother's letters. 'Let us do the same with our correspondence as with that of Herr Rath, and bind the letters at the end of the year.'⁸⁹

•

Chapter Eight

§ 1 — 1839

KING LEOPOLD was a little anxious when Albert and Ernst came to England, so he armed Albert with a letter to the Queen. 'They are good and honest creatures, deserving your kindness. . . . I recommend them to your *bienveillance*.'

They came in autumn, when the park at Windsor was golden and quiet. The carriage drove into the courtyard and Albert saw Victoria waiting for them at the top of the stairs.

There had been confusion on the way and Albert's clothes had not arrived. So he could not dine—but he went into the drawing-room after dinner, and Melbourne, who was perhaps as anxious as Leopold, leaned over to the Queen and said that he was struck with Prince Albert's likeness to her. It was a nervous occasion. The evening passed, and when the Queen went to her room, she wrote in her diary: 'It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert, who is beautiful.'⁶⁰

Next day, they rode—a gay cavalcade, sweeping through the glades of Windsor Forest. She watched him upon his horse. Once he took off his hat and she saw his golden hair, blown in the wind. Night after night she went to her room and wrestled with her heart and her independence. It was not until October 14th that she summoned him to her. Even then, she sent the message through an old servant of the Coburg family. At half past twelve o'clock, Albert went to her closet. The door closed behind him and they were alone. Their shyness made the first moments uneasy for them—the girl of twenty trembled as she spoke. He must be aware of why she had sent for him, she said. It would make her 'too happy' if he would consent to what she wished.

She wrote the story in her journal, of how he did not hesi-

tate, of how he received the offer with 'the greatest demonstration of kindness and affection.' 'He is perfection in every way, in beauty, in everything. I told him I was quite unworthy of him. He said he would be very happy to spend his life with me. How I will strive to make him feel as little as possible the great sacrifice he has made!'⁶¹

Then, with pretty impetuosity, she wrote to her uncle: 'I love him more than I can say, and shall do everything in my power to render this sacrifice as small as I can. He seems to have great tact—a very necessary thing in his position. These last few days have passed like a dream to me. . . .' In her excitement she wrote letter after letter. The world had to be told the wonderful news. The Queen of England was in love. But she was also a little ashamed. In the years that followed she wrote of her indignation against herself for having kept Albert waiting for so long.

Albert too had been ruffled by the delay and he was frank with her. He told her that if she had not decided then, he could not have waited. He went to her 'with the quiet but firm resolution to declare, that on his part, he was tired of the delay, and would withdraw entirely from the affair.'⁶²

But now, they danced and rode together, cantering through the Windsor park. 'Victoria is so good and kind to me,' Albert wrote, 'that I am often at a loss to believe that such affection should be shown to me.'

The Coburg plan was complete. The small pettifogging affairs of its Court were no more than the background of Albert's childhood. Happy over the success of his scheme, Leopold said that he had almost the feeling of old Simeon: 'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.' But the Queen and the Prince were to outstrip his plan. From the day she was crowned, Victoria had become aloof. In the first moment of freedom, her childhood, her mother and even her uncle's plans had formed a bitterness within her. Suspicious and wary of every move she made, she had

written no letters to Albert. Just as she had been cold during those early years, so in her betrothal she became radiant because of the love which flowered within her. Just as Albert was quiet and restrained, so was she caught up in an ecstasy, which increased from day to day. 'I am so bewildered by it all, that I hardly know how to write; but I *do* feel *very very* happy. . . . I do so adore Albert! He is quite an angel, and so very very kind to me, and seems so fond of me. . . . I cannot bear to part from him.'⁶³

Stockmar and Leopold enjoyed their triumph. The Coburgs had made their greatest conquest. The Hanoverians were back in the obscurity of Herrenhausen, whence they had come, and half of Europe was under the influence of Coburg Princes.

Stockmar could not let the occasion pass without sending Albert a long letter of advice. Albert sent his answer: but it was not a bridegroom's letter; he talked of *nobility* and *resolution* and courage. 'In regulating my actions, good advice is the one thing needful; and that you can give me better than anyone, if you will only make up your mind to sacrifice your time to me, at least for the first year of my being here.'⁶⁴

Albert was still afraid and he wrote to his stepmother in Gotha: 'My future position will have its dark sides and the sky will not always be blue and unclouded.' He trembled over the memory of the Thuringian Forest. 'Oh, the future!' he wrote. 'Does it not bring with it the moment when I shall have to take leave of my dear, dear home, and of you?' He talked of melancholy⁶⁵—he gathered his letters together, his books, the little valueless things, the souvenirs of his childhood. There was no ecstasy in his letters. 'I think I shall be very happy, for Victoria possesses all the qualities which make a home happy, and seems to be attached to me with her whole heart.' Of his own feelings he said little. 'My future lot is high and brilliant, but also plentifully strewn

with thorns.’⁶⁶ And he added: ‘While I shall be untiring in my efforts and labours for the country to which I shall in future belong. . . I shall never cease to be a true German, a true Coburg and Gotha man.’

§ II — 1839

ON NOVEMBER 23rd, with his picture set within a bracelet upon her arm, the Queen faced eighty-three members of the Privy Council at Buckingham Palace, and told them that she was to marry Albert of Saxe-Coburg. She felt her ‘hands shake,’ but she ‘did not make one mistake.’ Croker has told us of the feminine delicacy with which she read the declaration and of her voice, ‘clear and untroubled,’ her eye ‘bright and calm, neither bold nor downcast, but firm and soft. There was a blush on her cheek.’

When she drove away from London to Windsor, the people crowded about the Palace gates to cheer her. She drove out past them, radiant and bowing. Albert’s ‘dear picture’ was upon her hand. Her future was almost secure.

§ III — 1840

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the betrothal was simple, but a hundred little intrigues arose in its wake. Prince Albert’s position was almost unique and the Queen was anxious as to what rank he should assume. There was no precedent to guide her. There had been only Anne’s ‘very stupid and insignificant husband’ who had been made into a peer. Albert’s coming was an entirely different matter. He was determined not to accept an English title, nor did he intend to renounce all claims to Coburg. If his brother Ernst died without children, the ducal crown of Coburg would come to him.

Up to now, his relationship with the Queen was personal:

their betrothal belonged to one little room at Windsor. But there came the inevitable day when the Queen had to announce her intention to Parliament. She had to sponsor an unknown German Prince to the statesmen and to the people.

On January 16th, the Queen opened Parliament and announced her betrothal from the throne. A labyrinth of intrigues was set up. The Tories pointed out that the word 'Protestant' had not been mentioned in the announcement: there were rumours that Prince Albert was a Catholic. The Queen wrote to him hastily. 'A few stupid people here try to say you are a Catholic: but nobody will believe it.' Yet she asked for a short history of the House of Coburg, and Albert was obliged to set down his credentials and to show that there had not been 'a single Catholic Princess introduced into the Coburg family since the appearance of Luther.' The mistrust annoyed him and he searched through his papers for the confession of faith which he had made for his Confirmation. He translated it and sent it to Victoria so that she was able to assure the nervous Anglicans that he was 'particularly Protestant in his opinions.' Malicious and ignorant questions were hurled at Lord Palmerston and he, in his turn, wrote to Stockmar, asking him whether Prince Albert belonged to any sect, 'the tenets of which could prevent him from partaking of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England.' Stockmar reassured him and this little doubt was set at rest.

Then the Government wrestled over the question of his annuity. As he walked about the gardens or made expeditions into the country about Coburg, Albert was pestered and troubled by impudent questions from England. In the matter of the annuity it was Stockmar who soothed the English politicians. In the House, Lord John Russell lost his temper 'and flung dirt at Peel, like a sulky boy flinging rotten eggs,' and Greville, who made this note, in commenting on the reduction of the Prince's allowance from fifty thou-

sand to thirty thousand pounds a year, added: 'There was something mean and sordid in squabbling for what money they could get.'

'Do what one will, nothing will please these Tories,' Victoria wrote to her uncle. But what horrified her was the attitude of the Duke of Wellington. Her old friend had opposed her and it was a long time before she forgave him. Indeed, it was with great difficulty that she was 'induced to invite him to her wedding,' and the 'busy mischief-makers and angry Tories' carried the story to the Duke's own ear that she had said: 'I won't have that old rebel,'⁶⁷

The Queen poured her troubles into her letters to Albert. 'The English are very jealous of any foreigner interfering in the government of this country,' she wrote. But she struggled valiantly to gain him some sort of position. She gently urged that he should be given precedence over the rest of the Royal Family. This aroused a fresh political storm, which reached its full strength when she added that she wished to insert his name in the Liturgy. The Queen was in despair: everybody seemed to be making plots to spoil her love story. Albert consoled her in a letter. He wrote: 'All I have to say is, that while I possess your love, they cannot make me unhappy.'

Nor was this the end. Lord Melbourne wished Anson to be Albert's Private Secretary. This news was also carried to Albert in a letter. He sat down at his desk in Coburg and wrote that he wished *all* appointments to be non-political, and Anson, he knew, had already been Melbourne's secretary. He regretted that the person nearest to him should be a Government official. 'Except yourself, I have no one to confide in,' he wrote to the Queen.

In the midst of the festivities at Coburg, Albert must have suffered in a turmoil of doubts and misgivings. The English seemed to be doing everything possible to make him unwelcome. They begrudged him his rank and his fortune,

they questioned his religion and they tried to deny him a Secretary who could be his personal friend as well as his servant. The Queen reassured him. 'You may entirely rely upon me that the people who will be about you will be absolutely pleasant people.'

Even Uncle Leopold disturbed their peace. The Queen received an 'ungracious letter' from him. 'He appears to me to be nettled because I no longer ask for his advice, but dear Uncle is given to believe that he must rule the roost everywhere.'

The Duchess of Kent was almost forgotten in this chaos. Albert had always been fond of his 'Aunt Kent,' and when he wrote to her, from his seclusion, he sent her a ring—one she had given him on Victoria's birthday. 'It has your name upon it,' he wrote, 'but that name is Victoria's too.' Her part was ended. The rôle of 'dowager' settled upon her heavily and darkly, and she wrote a pathetic little letter to Albert, trying to draw herself back into the story, telling him of Victoria, 'sitting all alone in her room, silent and sad.' Victoria was doing no such thing. She was wrestling with Peel and Palmerston and Melbourne and the Duke, and, at almost every point, her firmness beat them into submission. There was something tyrannical in the way she mastered them all. Her beloved Melbourne, who had been her friend from the beginning, she pushed away and held at arm's length. When he had asked her, in 1839, if there was any truth in the reports of her betrothal, she said she had 'nothing to tell him.'⁶⁸ Yet a fortnight afterwards, she informed him that 'the whole thing was settled.' She resented Peel's very existence, and even the calm and charming Duke of Wellington was rebuffed.

The self-willed young Queen did as she pleased with ten men, who had double her years and double her experience. She rapped her uncle over the knuckles and then smoothed away the trouble by suggesting that the bust of Princess

Charlotte should be brought to Windsor, so that he 'would see it *oftener*' than he did at Claremont.

In her firmness, she found only one thing to amuse her. Palmerston was to marry Lady Cowper. 'I feel sure it will make you smile,' she wrote to Albert, who was still in Coburg.

Chapter Nine

§ 1 — 1839-40

ON DECEMBER 9th, the Queen said in a letter to her Uncle Leopold that she was 'quite miserable' because Albert had not written to her 'for *ten* days.' Away from England, living again with his own people, misgivings had disturbed Albert and made him silent. Everything had been easy for him when he sat with the Queen in her little room at Windsor. But now, while she wrestled with her ministers and prepared for the great occasion, he was drawn into the simple festivities of Coburg. Victoria wrote of difficulties which he had never imagined. Even now, while the orange blossoms were being sewn upon her dress and the diamonds strung for her hair, she was struggling with the Tories. She told him that they conducted themselves 'very badly.'⁶⁹ He was asked to believe that the Whigs were 'the only safe and loyal people,' and that the Radicals would 'also rally round their Queen, to protect her from the Tories.'⁷⁰ Peel had been coarse enough to suggest that if the marriage resulted 'in a numerous family, he would be ready to vote a larger sum to the Prince.'⁷¹ Little wonder that Albert was silent. What was this great tangle of affairs into which he was being drawn? Would the schooling of Stockmar and Uncle Leopold be enough to strengthen him? He wrote to the Duchess of Kent of his 'dread of being unequal' to the position and of his 'multitude of emotions.' The Hanoverian uncles resented him and Victoria wrote that he would have no right to quarter the English arms, but she, as Sovereign, had 'the power to allow it by Royal command.' How much power would come to *him*, in exchange for the heart he buried in the quiet of the German valley?

'I am the sovereign,' she wrote to him. Then she added that the business of being sovereign 'can stop and wait for

nothing.'⁷² So after the wedding there was to be no respite in the pretty park at Windsor and they would be whirled into the maelstrom of London after a day or two. '... dear Albert, you have not at all understood the matter ... it is quite impossible for me to be absent from London,' she wrote to him. And then, she added, a little imperiously: 'This is also my own wish, in every way.'⁷³

Some time before, she had consoled him by telling him that Melbourne had made 'a very fine speech' about him and his ancestors, and she congratulated him because the Queen of Spain was sending him the Golden Fleece. But what were these honours to mean, if every action was to be ruled by this little woman who wrote: 'I am the sovereign, and that business can stop and wait for nothing'? She wrote to him too that there would be no great dinners and that her 'good old' Prime Minister would dine with them three or four times a week, almost always on Sundays. And then there was this strange thing called the English Sabbath. She could not invite other people to dinner, 'as it is not reckoned right here for me to give dinners on Sunday.'

There was little consolation after all this when she apologised for writing 'on picture notepaper, seeing that we are in deep mourning ... but it was quite impossible for me to write to you on mourning paper.' She promised him that the black edges would be taken off for the day of the marriage 'and for two or three days after, and then put on again.'⁷⁴

Coburg did its best to soothe Albert's fears. The winter was cold, but the stoves were warm and the great chandeliers were alight and there were balls, trumpets and wine. The old Duke, intoxicated with the success of the Coburgs, and the glory his clever Leopold had made for them, rose at the end of the banqueting table and cried 'God Save the Queen.' The Coburg artillery fired a salute outside. The wind came in through the windows and the muslin curtains caught the

flames of the candles and blazed in sheets of fire, to the top of the room. But even this excitement could not stop the cheering and the singing. The Princesses had brought out all their jewels. The peasants had put on their last green flag. It was a sad little picture—this nervous boy, drilled and governed, his own will not yet fully awake, parting from everything he loved, leaving every place which was known to him and every face which shone with affection for him. He was still a boy, not yet twenty-one. We are told that 'young as he was when he married the Queen, he devoted himself at once to what he conscientiously believed to be the duties of his station.' We are told that 'he gave up every habit, however familiar and dear, every predilection, no matter how sweet, every indulgence and sentiment or amusement that in any way threatened to interfere with the steadfast performance of the part he had assigned to himself.'⁷⁶ In that pompous sentence lies the key to the reason why he did not write to the Queen for so many days. In this quiet interval, he was attending the funeral of his own youth.

When he did write to the Queen, Albert's letter was affectionate. 'How often are my thoughts with you! The hours I was privileged to pass with you in your dear little room are the radiant points of my life and I cannot even yet clearly picture to myself that I am to be indeed so happy as to be always near you, always your protector.' But he did not tell her that he loved her.

As Albert walked from place to place, his greyhound Eôs rubbing his nose against his hand, he said nothing but 'Good-bye.' Coburg and Gotha waved wet handkerchiefs to him. Little boys climbed the trees and called out to him and old women cried at the doors and windows. His grandmother had followed him to the door, clutching his hand and sobbing 'My angel Albert.' The carriage sped over the cold ground, away from Gotha. Albert looked back to the castle for the last time. The old Duchess waved from a win-

dow. He saw her handkerchief disappear. She had fallen back, crying in agony: 'Albert, Albert.' Her attendants had caught her in their arms and carried her away, the wet handkerchief hanging from her hand.

§ II — 1840

LEOPOLD INSISTED upon one last scrutiny before Albert came to England, so the bridegroom paused in Brussels. He looked 'well and handsome,' but 'much irritated by what happened in the House of Commons.'⁷⁶ Albert talked of the political haggling over his annuity. 'He does not care about the money,' added his uncle, in his letter to Victoria, 'but he is much shocked and exasperated by the disrespect of the thing. . . .'

Leopold had done an amazing thing. He had seen his sister come out of comparative obscurity, to become the mother of England's Queen. He had taken Albert from the same small life to help his niece to rule the greatest country in the world. But Albert was already preparing himself to serve his own purposes as well as those of his uncle and his bride. He had arrived in Brussels 'rather exasperated . . . and pretty full of grievances.'⁷⁷ His uncle was a little disturbed by this new self-confident nephew, but he wrote to his niece: 'Albert is quick, not obstinate, in conversation, and open to conviction if good arguments are brought forward. When he thinks himself right he only wishes to have it *proved* that he *misunderstands* the case, to give it up without ill-humour. He is not inclined to be sulky, but I think that he may be rendered a little melancholy if he thinks himself unfairly or unjustly treated. . . .'⁷⁸

Leopold wrote one more letter to succour Victoria on her wedding day. He recalled Princess Charlotte and the rule of their married life, 'never to permit *one single day* to pass over *ein missverständnis*, however trifling it might be.' He urged

them to do the same, adding: 'Albert is gentle and open to reason.'

§ III — 1840

THEY WERE married on the morning of February 10th. In the haste of her preparations, with her nervous ladies at her elbow, the Queen paused to write Albert a little note and, folded in *billet* form, it was taken to him by hand. It ended: 'Send one word when you, my most dear beloved bridegroom, will be ready,' and she signed it 'thy ever-faithful Victoria R.'

Albert was himself writing to his grandmother. Some weeks before he had written: 'God will not take it amiss if, in that serious act, even at the altar, I think of you, for I will pray to Him for you, and for your soul's health and He will not refuse us His blessing.' He wrote again, on his marriage morning: 'In less than three hours, I shall stand before the altar with my dear bride! In these solemn moments I must once more ask your blessing, which I am well assured I shall receive, and which will be my safeguard and my future joy! I must end.' Then, with a little wave of anxiety, he added: 'God help me!'

Whatever political feelings and public tempers were involved, London was not to be denied the joy of seeing a great occasion. Although the day was grey with rain, the people surged around the palace and climbed the trees and covered the fences, waiting, from dawn onwards, to see the cavalcade drive past.

Thousands of people stood at the door of Buckingham Palace. The crimson carpet was spread upon the steps. The door opened, and the Coburg Princes came out, in their dark green uniforms. Albert was dressed as a British Field-Marshal. Across his breast was the ribbon of the Garter which Victoria had given him. The Order, in diamonds and

precious stones, shone on his coat, and he wore the garter of diamonds below his knee. When he stepped out into the great wet space in front of the palace, trumpets split the air, colours were lowered and arms were presented to him, as to the sovereign. His father and brother accompanied him. When they came to St. James's Palace, they went into the Chapel and waited.

The doors of Buckingham Palace opened again, and the little Queen came out. Her dress was white and vast. Her eyes were on the ground and her head moved slightly when the people cheered. Her mother had been taken out of her cupboard to enjoy a little moment of glory, and the old Duchess drove to St. James's Palace with her daughter. The bride's face was not covered by her veil, so the people saw her when her lips quivered. They pressed in about the carriages, a London crowd, shivering in a damp London day, tense and excited, laughing and pressing in still closer, to watch the parade of meticulous soldiers and glorious horses and the white-dressed figure, moving on towards the dark red palace, where the wedding was to be.

Within the Chapel, the great, the noble and the beautiful of England waited for her. The dresses of the peeresses were blue and white, light green and amber, crimson and purple, far spreading, flecked with flowers. Each fine hand held a wedding favour, some of which, *The Times* tells us 'were admirable specimens of refined taste.' It was a day of bows, rosebuds, white satin ribbon, silver lace and orange blossoms. The cushions in the high, dark Chapel were crimson and they were heavy with gold borders and fringes. The Chapel shone with gold, and the altar was rich with salvers, vases and flagons.

The Princes, the Princesses and the peers and peeresses stood, stiff and expectant, waiting for the Queen. Only once was there a shiver of excitement among them. It was when the Queen Dowager came in, heavy with years, in a robe of

rich silk and purple velvet, trimmed with ermine. The Archbishops stood up as she entered and they remained standing, even after she had knelt and prayed. She sent Lord Howe to them to ask them to sit down again, and *The Times* reporter wrote: 'This act of considerate courtesy created a general sensation throughout the Chapel.'

When Albert came in, the gentlemen of England clapped him and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and smiled when they saw that the collar of the Garter over his shoulders was made gay by two white rosettes. He looked 'pale and pensive.' Ernst, in whom the same writer saw 'more of determination but less of good-natured complacence' than in Albert, bowed his pleasure to the ladies.

The Queen came into the Chapel; the trumpets and the drums sounded again. One glory enveloped another. The great train of the Queen's dress was carried by twelve ladies. *The Times* man took out his pencil again. 'Ladies more beautiful never graced palace, hall, or country green.'

After they were married, the young Queen stepped away from the bridegroom, to kiss the Queen Dowager, and then they drove back to Buckingham Palace, with the clapping of hands and the waving of handkerchiefs, Albert stiff and composed, his bride, with her hand enclosed in his. She turned it carefully so that she displayed her wedding ring. There was only one cheer which was louder than theirs, and that was for the old Duke of Wellington.

Later in the afternoon, the carriage left the Palace for Windsor. Greville, who could not like many things wholeheartedly, said that they drove off 'in a very poor and shabby style. Instead of the new chariot in which most married people are accustomed to dash along, they were in one of the old travelling coaches, the postilions in undress liveries. . . .'⁷⁰

Be that as it may, the Queen must have looked very pretty, in her white satin pelisse trimmed with swansdown,

with a white satin bonnet and feathers. Albert was in 'a plain dark travelling dress.' They drove towards Windsor.

Victoria and Albert were to belong to Windsor in the same way as a Squire and his lady belong to their village. Windsor was to be their own town, clustering about the walls of their castle, in mediæval fashion, living intimately and knowing them as the rest of England would never do. We are told that 'no merry peal of bells welcomed in the day,' and that the rain fell in torrents and made the town look very dull and miserable, but by the time that the carriages were upon the road, Windsor had awakened: 'The sun shot forth its beams and the bells, as if awakened from slumber, burst out in joyous chimes.'⁸⁰

As early as half past two, the Royal Standard had been raised on the Round Tower of the Castle. But the townspeople had to wait until it was dark before the Queen and her husband appeared. Then the walls of the houses 'glowed with crowns, stars, and all the brilliant devices which gas and oil could supply.'⁸¹

The travelling coach had passed through Eton and then up the Windsor hill. William the Norman had walked this way; the rude Saxon Kings had come here too, hot from the chase in the forest. The people of Windsor cheered and waved again, and the carriage drove in under the arch where the mutilated body of the Stuart martyr had been carried almost two hundred years before. The great doors were closed.

Within the Castle, the Queen wrote in her diary: 'I and Albert, alone.'

Chapter Ten

§ 1 — 1840

THE QUEEN and Prince Albert were up and walking about very early next morning. 'Strange that a bridal night should be so short,' wrote the cynical Greville. The Queen could not contain her ecstasy. She had to steal just one minute from Albert to write to her uncle of herself as 'the happiest, happiest being that ever existed. . . . He is an angel, and his kindness and affection for me is really touching. To look in those dear eyes, and that dear sunny face, is enough to make me adore him. I was a good deal tired last night, but am quite well again to-day, and happy.'⁸²

Her happiness bubbled over. She sat down again before lunch and wrote to Stockmar: 'There cannot exist a dearer, purer, nobler being in the world than the Prince.'

But Albert wrote no letters. While the Queen was unbridled and excited in her love, he remained quiet, giving the impression 'of not being happy.'⁸³ Greville recorded the Duchess of Bedford's notion that the Queen was 'excessively in love' with Albert, 'but he not a bit with her.' The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg had said 'that there never were such heart-breaking scenes as his leave-taking of his family, eternal as it must be.'⁸⁴

With all her ecstasy, the Queen did not forget her early warning that there was not to be a long honeymoon at Windsor, and on the third night, she collected a party together at the Castle, for dancing. Again Greville made a comment—he thought the honeymoon 'more strange than delicate . . . her best friends are shocked and hurt at her not conforming more than she is doing to English customs and at not continuing for a short space in that retirement, which modesty and native delicacy generally prescribe. . . .'⁸⁵

But the Queen was not modest, in the English sense of



The Queen and Prince Albert.

the word, and no accusation which has been brought against her is more foolish than that of prudishness. She was married and she wished the world to know it. Her thoughts on such matters were inherited from her Hanoverian uncles and she seldom practised the mock modesty of which her biographers often accuse her.

Albert was silent. Stockmar was at hand to censor his actions and to see that Uncle Leopold's principles were maintained. The older man was pleased. He wrote: 'Those who are not carried away by party feelings, like him greatly. He behaves in his difficult position extremely well.'

The first months of Albert's marriage must have been terrible for him. The Queen loved him, and she wished him to be a good husband and a lover, but she intended to remain Queen of England. The intoxication of this new happiness was not to affect her statesmanship. Victoria had been Queen for two and a half years. It had been picturesque to see her, young and impetuous, gathering about her the excitements of power and importance. But no country could be governed for long by such an autocrat. To criticise her youthful mistakes would be absurd in the light of the colossal achievement of the later years of her reign. But she undoubtedly began by making many enemies. She never forgot that she was Queen. She had almost dismissed her mother. The Duke of Wellington, the most honoured man in England, had been called 'a rebel' and threatened with not being invited to her wedding. She had rapped Peel across the knuckles. She had put her Uncle Leopold in his place, so that he complained that she 'put him aside as one does a piece of furniture which is no longer wanted.'⁸⁶ She had dreaded the thought of marrying, because she was so accustomed to having her own way, and when she recorded this fact in her journal, she said: 'I thought it was ten to one that I should not agree with anybody.'⁸⁷ Even Melbourne, whose service to her is one of the most beautiful chapters of the early story, was not

treated with whole-hearted confidence. Her political prejudices were stronger than those of the party leaders.

If Albert had not come to England to teach her the art of reticence and tolerance, her self-will would have brought her to ruin and tears. She had antagonised Ministers and lost the affectionate indulgence they had for her youth and inexperience. This was proved in the way they had humiliated her over the question of Albert's allowance and precedence.

Before the marriage Victoria had said: 'I have always had my own way . . . suppose he should endeavour to thwart me, and oppose me in what I like, what a dreadful thing it would be.' And Greville added: 'The best thing for her will be that he should have some firmness and resolution, and should show it, for her guidance and restraint.' This Albert did, with patience and self-effacement.

§ II — 1840

WHEN A WOMAN is in love, her desire for public power becomes less and less. This was true of the Queen, and she became more obedient to Albert's influence as the early months passed by.

There came the day when Albert was to be still more alone. Ernst, who had been with him all the time, was to return to Coburg. The sadness of the two Princes was terrible. The Queen ran upstairs, on the morning of their parting, to find Albert 'pale as a sheet and his eyes full of tears.'⁴¹ She tried to show her sympathy—but all he said was: 'Such things are hard to bear.'

'Oh, how did I feel for my dearest, precious husband at this moment!' wrote the Queen. ' . . . All has he left, and all for me. God grant that I may be the happy person, the *most* happy person, to make this dearest, blessed being happy and contented! What is in my power to make him happy, I will do.'

But her ecstatic promises were not always fulfilled. In May, when he complained of a want of confidence upon trivial matters, the Queen went to Melbourne for advice and pleaded that the neglect was 'entirely from indolence.' Melbourne urged her to alter this; he went to Anson, who was now the Prince's secretary, and told him that his own private opinion was that the Queen feared that her domestic harmony might be disturbed if Albert differed from her opinions on public matters.⁸⁹

In May, Albert wrote to his friend Löwenstein: 'In my whole life I am very happy and contented; but the difficulty in filling my place with proper dignity is that I am only the husband and not the master in the house.' At first, he did not even sit with the Queen when she interviewed her Ministers. It was still a new thing for her 'to *dare* to be unguarded in conversing with anybody.'⁹⁰ Some time passed before her love for him and this new delight of having somebody to talk to, caused her to become more trustful of his wisdom. She learned to listen to him and slowly, she gave Albert her friendship as well as her love. A sympathy more quiet and powerful than the love of which poets sing grew up between them.

While increasing his power, Albert did not seek to draw limelight to himself. This is why, in all the printed stories of this first year, we read of the development of the Queen's character, but little or nothing of the influence which was working upon her opinions and her temper.

Many months passed before Albert told his brother that Leopold, Aunt Louisa and Feodora all agreed that everything was going on much better since he had been in England and that Victoria had changed, much to her advantage.⁹¹

§ III — 1840

THEIR BRIEF honeymoon over, Victoria and Albert returned

to London and to the public anxieties which had grown up about the Queen during the past two years.

She was Queen of a great country, but a country in which there were many dissensions. Here was material upon which Albert, the growing statesman and leader, could experiment. The Tories and the Whigs spent more of their energy quarrelling among themselves than upon wrestling with the great problems of the country. There had been bad harvests ever since 1836. Trade was slow and, only a year before, discontented workmen had risen in several parts of the country. These revolts were so ugly that the Duke of Wellington said that even in war he had never seen a town subjected to such violence as Birmingham had been. There was dissension in the West Indian colonies, there was a wave of revolt through Canada, and in Ireland there was 'a deliberate system of cold-blooded and cowardly assassination.' In making this statement, Martin tells us that, during 1838, there were two hundred and seventy-seven committals for murder in eleven Irish counties, but only three convictions. In many places, people were no longer afraid of the law and the country had no leader who was without party bias. The Queen had many prejudices and few opinions. Melbourne had observed this in the early days and he had urged her to treat all parties alike. Thus the Prince's state of mind was of vast importance. If he could work with quiet knowledge and restraint, then he might become a leader. Ten years afterwards, in a letter to the Duke of Wellington, he spoke of his early ambition. He said that it was his wish to sink his own individual existence in that of his wife—to aim at no power by himself . . . to make his position entirely a part of hers.

If his object was so unselfish, and if, as he had shown over the matter of the appointment of his secretary, he was determined to maintain an attitude of absolute neutrality between Whig and Tory, then he was the man to become a leader. Even if he did not do his work in a spectacular way, even if

he did not mind being an unnoticed figure behind the politicians and the Queen, his influence would be no less great and certain. As early as February, he talked the matter over with Melbourne, who urged him to treat all parties, especially the Tories, in the spirit of a general amnesty. And Melbourne, with an unselfishness rare in party leaders, remembered the Queen's anger against the Tories and urged her to 'hold out the olive branch a little.'

§ IV — 1840

ALBERT'S UNPUBLISHED letters to his brother give his own impression of the events of June and July, the first months after their separation. He had been to the races at Epsom with the Queen. This was a democratic gesture, for no sovereign had ever mingled with the Derby crowds before. Albert himself had made his first nervous appearance in the political world, as President of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery and the civilisation of Africa. Stockmar had schooled him carefully. The Baron, Anson and Albert had prepared the speech and then Albert had walked up and down the room, learning it by heart. 'I got through it very well and had much applause,' he wrote to Ernst. 'There were people of all parties, religions, political opinions and ranks. That is why I accepted the presidentship. It is also why the committee was so anxious I should do so, so that my presence should lock out party spirit. Tell Ferdinand,⁹² to whom I shall write by next mail, he is not to imagine we are against Portugal. We are but religious and humane people, who wish to plant Christendom in Africa, but we do not intend to use weapons.'

On June 12th he wrote: 'You will not yet know that you very nearly lost your brother and sister, I will hurry to tell you what happened.

'The day before yesterday, Wednesday, we drove as

usual at six o'clock in our small carriage, with four horses and two postilions. I sat to the right, Victoria to the left. We had hardly got a hundred and fifty paces from Buckingham Palace, between the wall of Buckingham Palace and Green Park, when I saw a small, disagreeable looking man, leaning against the railing of Green Park, only six paces from us, holding something towards us. Before I could see what it was, a shot cracked and so dreadfully loud that we were both quite stunned. Victoria, who had been looking to the left, towards the rider, did not know the cause of the noise. My first thought was that in her present state the fright might harm her. I put both arms around her and asked her how she felt, but she only laughed. Then I turned around to look at the man (the horses were frightened and the carriage stopped). The man stood there in a theatrical position, a pistol in each hand. It seemed ridiculous. Suddenly he stopped, put a pistol on his arm, aimed at us and fired; the bullet must have gone over our heads, judging by the hole where it hit the garden wall. Now the many on-lookers came forward. They had been almost petrified before, and cried: "Kill him, kill him." I called out to the postilion to drive on. We went to see our aunt and then we drove through the parks, where we were most enthusiastically greeted by the people.'

London was passionately angry over the attack upon the Queen. Speakers, journalists and poets waved the flag of loyalty and demanded the man's destruction. One loyal poet wrote:

'... Pure was she as the ocean pearl—
Fair as the lily flower. . . .
Was that a maniac's senseless deed?
Was that a traitor's hand?'

Albert had behaved valiantly, in the eyes of the public.

The foreign Prince, who was still a mysterious personage to the mass of people in the street, went to the opera with the Queen soon after the shooting and 'the whole house rose and cheered, waved hats and handkerchiefs. . . .' The Queen, writing thus in her journal, added: ' . . . Albert was called for separately and much cheered.'

§ V — 1840

IN JULY, the Duke and Duchess of Nemours had crossed from Paris to stay with the Queen at Buckingham Palace, and Albert was especially pleased because the beautiful Duchess had 'a very soothing influence on Victoria.' Continuing the letter to his brother, he said: ' . . . Yesterday a bill of especial importance for me, was brought into the House, and accepted without any debate, after many intrigues had been tried against. This was the Regency Bill. In case of Victoria's death and her successor being under eighteen years of age, I am to be Regent—*alone*—Regent, without a Council. You will understand the importance of this matter and that it gives my position here in the country a fresh significance. Sussex⁹³ was against it and declared it an affront against the legal family. He intended to bring a protest into the House, but when his friends abandoned him, seeing the superior power of the Ministers, Whigs and the whole Tory party, he let the matter pass without intervention. Without Stockmar, the Ministers would probably have retired on account of the risk and trouble. But he (this only between us) won those people over and they are willing to undertake it. Victoria is most satisfied with this arrangement.'

On August 1st, Albert referred again to the Regency Bill. ' . . . all is well with us. The Regency Bill passed both houses, without the slightest opposition. The great intrigue of the Duke of Sussex had no success. He only made a very

stupid address in the House of Lords and nobody thought it necessary to reply to it. He made himself ridiculous.'

This was the first great step in the development of Albert's self-reliance. But he was not yet completely independent and he borrowed much of his strength from Stockmar. On July 11th, before he went back to rest in Coburg, the Baron wrote of the Regency Bill: 'With this act, my business here is for the present, and perhaps for ever, at an end. . . . I can at least say that I have not committed a single blunder, and this is always a satisfaction to a man in my years.'

Melbourne, too, was pleased, and when he spoke to the Queen he said that the Bill was passed entirely because of Albert's own character. 'Three months ago,' he said, 'they would not have done it for him!'⁹⁴

Albert had won all the Queen's love and the first tithe of her respect for his ability. Domestic contentment also softened her feeling for the world outside. Greville tells us how the Duke of Wellington dined at Buckingham Palace and was treated with the greatest civility by the Queen. Indeed, she endeavoured to repair her former coldness by every sort of attention and graciousness, to which he was by no means insensible.⁹⁵ It was without doubt the Prince's plan that they should be reconciled. When the Duke walked with Greville afterwards, he talked of Albert's civility to him. He 'never saw better manners, or anybody more generally attentive.' The Duchess of Kent was there too, and she talked to the Duke 'in a strain of satisfaction.' Greville sweetened his pen and wrote: '... there is something like sunshine in the Palace just now.'⁹⁶

Albert was more contented. The Regency Bill assured his position and also, with the closing of Parliament, he was escaping from town to their beloved Windsor. He wrote to his brother of his success: 'Everybody is exceedingly friendly towards me.'

But Lehzen still opposed him. For many years, she had governed the Queen. It was not easy for her to give up her privileges and her power. In later years, the Queen realised that the Prince's task had not been easy. When Theodore Martin wrote his *Life of the Prince Consort*, the Queen passed his statement that Lehzen was blind to the obvious truths, and that her former influence must, in the natural course of things, give way before that of a husband.⁹⁷ But even with Lehzen, Albert enjoyed a victory. In the same letter to Coburg, he said: 'In spite of Lehzen and the Master of the Horse, I shall drive *with* Victoria in a carriage to the House [for the closing of Parliament] and sit beside her on a throne especially built for me.' There had been other influences to disturb his domestic life in London. 'I can boast of the masterpiece of having driven the Lord Chamberlain and Saunders out of their rooms, back to St. James's Palace,'⁹⁸ he wrote.

He was elated. He had worked quietly and he had already won two or three small victories, and he was still only twenty-one years of age. He had also discovered that the Queen loved a joke. Dainty puns and verses were exchanged over the dinner-table. Victoria recalled her boisterous Uncle Cumberland who had gone to sleep during a meal. He had started out of his dream to announce: 'Ah, you will call me the Duke of Slumberland now.' Such jokes gave a touch of gaiety to the end of a tiresome day. Bound to the Queen by a sense of humour, Albert found a new defence against the tempers and intrigues about him. Victoria's laugh was always loud and jolly; she particularly disliked what she termed a *Sunday face*.⁹⁹

Later in the year Albert wrote, when talking of a wife for his brother and the 'chains' of matrimony: '. . . the heavier and tighter they are, the better for you. A married couple must be chained to one another, be inseparable, and they must live only for one another.

'I wish you could be here and see in us, a couple joined in love and unanimity. Now Victoria is also ready to give up something for my sake, I everything for her sake.¹⁰⁰ Become as happy as we are, more I cannot wish for you. Don't think I lead a submissive life; on the contrary, here, where the position of the man is as it is, I have formed a prize life for myself.'

•

Chapter Eleven

§ 1 — 1840

THE PRINCE'S life became definitely divided in its interests. In London, he fulfilled his uncle's wishes, but in the Castle at Windsor his life was much as it would have been in Coburg. The old Castle in the Thames Valley, whither they came in August, was as full of stories as the Feste Coburg, where he had played as a boy. He walked in the forest. 'I feel as if in Paradise in this fine fresh air,'¹⁰¹ he wrote, when he had escaped from London and Parliament and the tiresome Georgian relations. Even here, the red dispatch boxes came from Whitehall and, sometimes, Palmerston himself. One Sunday, Albert walked with him in the Park. They talked of many things: of Ernst and the proposal that he should marry a Russian Princess. Palmerston discouraged the idea and said that Russian authority seemed to be decreasing more and more in Germany. Albert said he thought that there must be a war between England and Russia within five years,¹⁰² and Palmerston agreed with him.

The story of Windsor was older than that of the Norman Conqueror. It had been a palace for longer than any other castle in Europe. The forests, through which Albert rode, were dark with legends; the flowering chestnuts and the wide stretches of grassland awakened memories of the beautiful land which lay between the Rosenau and the Thuringian Forest.

The Castle was vast, but the rooms in which Victoria and Albert lived were all at one end, overlooking the park where the ghost of Herne the Hunter rode, where Elizabeth had shot buck, and where Falstaff had made his ignominious journey in the washing basket. Here was stuff of which Albert's dreams and humours could be made. There were great opportunities for his love of gardening. He planted

trees and changed the paths. 'I shall occupy myself much with it,' he wrote to his father.

The Queen had given Albert the horses sent by the Persian and Indian Princes, because Lord Albemarle¹⁰³ would not feed them. '... I shall have a stud at Windsor. Victoria will give me the money to keep them and I shall have the sole command over them.'¹⁰⁴

Out of doors, he could be himself again. But the Queen was selfish enough to object to his being away for lunch, when he went hunting. He complained once or twice, but he soon saw that, in such sacrifices, he could increase his influence over her.

Uncle Leopold left the Court at Brussels to come and stay with his pupils. The evening conversation became very serious again. The King sat back in his chair, 'with half-closed eyes and his peculiar smile.' He announced, a little pompously, to Albert: 'It is astonishing with how little wisdom the world is governed.' Stockmar, too, continued to send his little homilies, and when the Prince was not changing the gardens and planning the park, he was able to read the Baron's letters. 'Continue, dear Prince, to insist upon honour, integrity, and order in your household. . . . At your present time of life, you must have nothing to say to churlish, commonplace, repellant or unconscientious people.'¹⁰⁵

There was another pleasure which increased for Albert at Windsor. Lady Lyttelton wrote that one evening in October, when she was sitting by candlelight, she heard 'dear Prince Albert, playing on the organ; and with such master-skill. . . . I never listened with much more pleasure to any music.' At dinner, she ventured to ask him what she had heard. 'Oh, my organ! a new possession of mine. I am so fond of the organ! It is the first of instruments; the only instrument for expressing one's feelings.' 'How strange he is!' she wrote. 'He must have been playing just while the Queen was finishing her toilette and then he went to cut

jokes, and eat dinner, and nobody but the organ knows what is in him, except, indeed, by the look of his eyes sometimes.'¹⁰⁶

Slowly, Albert taught the Queen the quieter entertainments of domestic life. Before her marriage, she had loved London, dancing and late hours. But Albert's tastes were different. He was seen nodding on the sofa, as early as half-past ten. 'The late hours are what I find it most difficult to bear,' he complained. Within a year, the Queen wrote in her journal: 'Since the blessed hour of my marriage, and still more since the summer, I dislike and am unhappy to leave the country.' It was natural for Albert to write of the 'thick, heavy atmosphere' of London, and when Victoria told him how her taste had changed he was delighted.

§ II — 1840

THE DIFFICULTIES of Albert's position were lessening, but these had not been the only cause of his early distress. Most of the letters from Coburg gave cause for worry. Up to the time of their separation, Ernst had been good and quiet, obeying the stable dictates of his brother. But the dividing of their ways had left Ernst to invent his own pleasures: and they were pleasures which brought alarm and disgust to his family.

Ernst once wrote of Albert to the Queen: 'I love and esteem him more than anyone on earth. . . . Albert is my second self and my heart is one with his.' Even this boy, into whom his father's libertine blood had flowed in fullest measure, was abashed before his brother's goodness. To him, Albert was 'pure before the world and before his own conscience.'¹⁰⁷ In this same letter there are two sentences which show a still fuller knowledge of his brother. Ernst added: 'Not as though he did not know what sin was, the earthly temptations, the weakness of man. No; but because

he knew and still knows how to struggle against them, supported by the incomparable superiority and firmness of his character.' Ernst begged that the Queen should 'feel how great a treasure' she possessed in Albert. 'I feel very lonely,' he ended his letter.

In his loneliness, Ernst was not strong enough to withstand his temptations. A few months after he had returned to Germany, Albert wrote to him: 'A great storm is rising up against you in Coburg. All kinds of rumours and bad news have come. . . . Papa is terribly upset and annoyed. You know what grief you cause me thereby. . . . I, too, have heard that you had committed some thoughtless tricks in your rashness and I can understand his grief. . . . You well know the incidents and scandals which have happened in Coburg Castle and in the town, and this knowledge has made you indifferent to morality. . . . I am sorry to have to say that your reputation, which was so brilliant, has suffered. . . . Your health has been endangered to the utmost.'¹⁰⁸

Later in the year, when Ernst had been allowed to return to his father's house, Albert wrote: '. . . now you must look upon all incidents of the past time as *far below yourself and your dignity*. . . . I cannot agree to your plans of building new houses. For the present I have no means for such undertakings. I have not even paid all my debts yet, for the new furniture.'¹⁰⁹ . . . If you wish me to be of any use to you, I must request you to be open and fully truthful with me, for if I am to defend you and then am laughed at and told "You know nothing about him," then my help will be of no use. . . . Don't throw my good advice aside.'¹¹⁰

The Queen was not so gentle with Ernst. Some of his German aunts came to stay in England and they whispered stories into her ear. They 'hate you awfully and think you are the cause of all misery,'¹¹¹ wrote Albert. He urged his brother to marry. '. . . Wedded life is the only thing that can make up for the lost relationships of our youth. . . . You

need a wife who is loving and good, not self-willed when you discuss things with her, but one who will influence you by her intelligence.¹¹²

Albert's father had no such high-minded notions about his son's happiness in England. He was anxious to exploit every possible advantage and he wrote to Albert, telling him that Ernst was short of money and suggested that he should ask Victoria to let Ernst have an allowance. Albert was angered. 'By next mail, I shall inform him that it certainly will be disagreeable for you,' he wrote.

In November, Albert's concern over his father's greed reached the point of fury. 'Always money and always money,' he wrote to Ernst. '... I return Papa's letter to you. The principles he reveals in it can really sting one to one's heart. ... God help you and your affairs. ...'

Albert had drawn his father's discontent upon himself. The Duke accused Albert of putting himself 'on the same footing with him as Uncle Leopold. This is without foundation, for such a thing would never occur to me. It is true that my position is very similar to his, in that we cannot sacrifice important interests to every whim coming from Coburg. ... He wanted to get money from Victoria for your journey, and I replied that, from love for you, I could not ask her. He wanted to appoint Stockmar Coburg Hausminister. I replied that he would undermine his influence *here*. ... He wanted to marry you to a Russian Princess; I declared this to be a political mistake. He wanted to have the Isle of Candia; the fate of Europe would be risked thereby. ... He wanted to have "the Royal Highness." In spite of all my endeavours, I could not yet get it guaranteed. ... These things have brought me up against him, but it is not my fault. ...

'... Don't think that your letters offend me in the least; it would be ridiculous if every open word one brother says to the other were to be considered offensive.'

§ III — 1840

THE QUEEN had followed Melbourne's advice and, writing to her Uncle Leopold from Windsor, in September, she showed that she was at last willing to take Albert into her confidence. 'Albert, who sends his love, is much occupied with the Eastern affairs and is quite of my opinion. . . .'¹¹³

The correspondence of the year deals fully with Spanish affairs and there is an amusing comment in one of Albert's letters, which shows that he had realised the feminine traits in the Queen's mind. Leopold, Albert and Ernst had come to a decision about the political parties in Spain. In a letter upon the subject, Albert said: 'Victoria, on the contrary, thinks that neither you nor Uncle Leopold understand anything, that you are for the Moderatos, whereas the Exaltos alone can reign in the country. . . . The names of the two parties give the cold critic sufficient opinion of the affair.'¹¹⁴

§ IV — 1840

AT EASTER, the Queen and Prince Albert had taken the Sacrament together for the first time, in St. George's Chapel. The Queen has told, in a memorandum written after the Prince's death, that he 'had a very strong feeling about the solemnity of this act, and did not like to appear in company either the evening before or on the day on which he took it. . . .'¹¹⁵ On these occasions, the Queen and the Prince almost always dined alone, and the letters of this first year at Windsor give pictures of them, on the evening before the Sacrament, playing Mozart together and being drawn into a fuller personal knowledge of each other. For they were both religious, in very different ways. The Prince's religion seems to have grown out of inherent spirituality, while the Queen's faith was confused with ethics, training and morality. For

him, the Ten Commandments were primarily a divine revelation while, for her, they were primarily a law of life.

One is suddenly arrested in the Prince's record—the record of an apparently mature man, by the realisation that he was still only twenty years of age. He celebrated his twenty-first birthday at Windsor. 'How different from what it used to be,' he wrote to Ernst. His servant, 'with his embarrassed congratulations in the morning,' and his dog 'were the only well-known faces.'

The Court was preparing to go back 'to the smoky town.' The Royal letters became filled with the affairs of France, the Queen's sympathy for the old King, and her anger with the Thiers Government, because of its preparations for war. The memoirs and histories of the day are full of the details of these affairs and they do not require much space here, but one must realise that, as the year moved on towards October and November, the Prince grew closer and closer to the Queen as her adviser. Even Greville was slowly converted to a certain appreciation of the changes in the Queen. He had written of her as 'a spoiled child, only intent upon the gratification of her social predilections,' and being 'blinded by her partialities.'¹¹⁶ But in May of the next year, in writing of the ministerial difficulties of the moment, he said that the Queen was 'behaving very well.'¹¹⁷

Before they left Windsor, somebody came to Albert and proposed that a sentence should be added to the Liturgy, to pray for the Queen and the baby which was to be born. 'No, no; you have one already in the Litany—"All women labouring with child." You pray already five times for the Queen.'

The courtier at his elbow answered: 'Can we pray, Sir, too much for Her Majesty?'

The Prince answered: 'Not too heartily, but too often.'¹¹⁸

In November, they were back in Buckingham Palace. The letters to Coburg were brief. On the 21st, the Duchess of

Kent wrote to Ernst: 'In case your dear Albert might not find time to write . . . our good angel Albert remains at the side of his beloved.'

At three o'clock in the afternoon the Duchess wrote: 'A daughter was born at two o'clock. Mother and child are as well as they can be, God be praised.'

Prince Albert added a postscript, telling Ernst that Victoria was 'well and happy,' and adding: 'Albert, father of a daughter,¹¹⁹ you will laugh at me.'

Chapter Twelve

§ 1 — 1841-43

THE VICTORIAN age was born. Strange new influences were at work in the land, new social orders were arising, and old social tyrannies were dying: the English middle-class had come into being. Up to this time, the aristocracy had enjoyed immunity from the social laws by which lesser men were judged. His moral peccadilloes had not prevented George the Fourth from living in the style of an aristocrat and the people around him had lived in the grand manner. But the Victorian Court, with a husband and a wife living in domestic contentment, singing Mozart in the evening and going to bed at half-past ten, was the symbol of something new.

The mass of people, wedged in between the nobility and the peasants, formed the great middle-class, but this name had not yet been given them. Their respectable ambitions had seldom had any example from their Kings.¹²⁰ Now they turned towards Buckingham Palace and relished the new picture of a husband and wife walking in the garden, eschewing all aristocratic excesses, doting upon their first baby, and being serious about their public duties.

The enormous number of middle-class people had never had a voice before. Even the freedom of the peasants had been denied them. They could not rise in revolt when they were oppressed: they were neither fish nor fowl. They could not rub shoulders with the working classes and the aristocracy would not rub shoulders with them. Now they could look up to a man who was a Prince, but one who lived in much the same way as they did. He was careful to do nothing wrong in the eyes of the public and to justify England's acceptance of him. He paid no visits in general society but he went to museums and presided over scientific sympo-

siums. He was so immaculate that scandal could not touch him.

Gradually, as Grey tells us in the story of the Prince's early years, the country came to 'estimate and admire the beauty of domestic life beyond reproach, or the possibility of reproach, of which the Queen and he set so noble an example.'¹²¹

It was not easy for the aristocracy to embrace this new scheme of things. The Georgian Princes and their contemporary peers had always felt a certain right to define the morality of their class. They resented the intrusion of this new order—this incursion of early hours and straight-laced rules. When the Sabbatarians protested against Albert's games of chess on Sunday, he immediately eschewed all such extravagances and went to bed earlier than ever. Nor did the nobility admire the more bourgeois beauty of Albert, whose stiffness and self-conscious care of his behaviour did not fit in with their idea of good breeding. Greville wrote that the Duke of Wellington told him that it was the 'Prince who insisted on spotless character (the Queen not caring a straw about it)'¹²² and that Albert was 'extremely straight-laced and a great sticker for morality, whereas she was rather the other way.'¹²³

The princes and the peers were still more aggravated because Albert kept all the commandments he preached. A good man is made tolerable if he has a few faults upon which one may dwell. It is a paradox that one tolerates the virtues of public men, greatly because they have a few human weaknesses to bring them nearer to the common standard. But Albert had no vices. While the middle-classes saw something of their own striving in the happy domestic picture of the Queen and Albert, society did not accept too readily the yoke of strict virtue. The peers shifted from one foot to another, in discomfort, before the new law. The gaming tables had been swept out of the drawing-rooms at Windsor

and Princes no longer sat over the table after dinner, heavy with food and drink and leering over the telling of bawdy stories. Instead, there was a piano and a drawing board and the Queen would not allow the gentlemen to stay in the dining-room more than five minutes after the ladies had left for the drawing-room; there was no third, fourth, or fifth glass of port at the royal table, and so the conversation was limited.

In February of 1843, the rigidity of the Court morals reached a climax. A scandal had brought the names of Prince George of Cambridge and Lady Augusta Somerset most unhappily together. The unpretty story was told to the Queen and when Lady Augusta was brought to Windsor, Victoria was livid. She swore that the stories about Lady Augusta and the Prince were true, and went so far as to set down her charges in writing; she advanced like the angel with the flaming sword and said such people should not come into her Court. The Duke of Cambridge took up Lady Augusta's cudgels and the Duke of Wellington and Peel were enlisted. Letters were written and causes pleaded. Prince Albert himself interfered. He had to answer the Duke's protests against the Queen and he was niggardly in his withdrawal of the charge. '*... he supposed they must believe that it was so*' since Prince George had given his word of honour. Greville regretted the 'prudery of Albert,' and he blamed the Queen's 'love of gossip and exceeding arrogance and heartlessness.'¹²⁴

Albert had little to lose or gain through the commendation of the English peers. He was one of the few people of his day who could say 'Honesty is the best policy,' with the conviction that he lived up to it. Instead of moving from drawing-room to drawing-room, he turned to the masses for his interests and he tried to realise his sense of duty towards the poor. A few years later he wrote to his brother: 'I am working on social improvements and I take the chair at public

meetings.' He further denied the old order by declaring, with almost startling zeal, that England's principal evil was 'the unequal division of property and the dangers of poverty and envy arising therefrom.' He did not think it was right to diminish riches 'as the Communists' wished, but, in the letter in which he set down his views, he added: 'I think that England will solve this problem first.'¹²⁶

It is interesting to remember that one of Albert's first social reforms was the building of flats for the poor in Kennington. Kennington was the property of the Duchy of Cornwall, the goose which had always laid golden eggs for the Princes of Wales, few of whom had ever bothered to go to Kennington or to Cornwall. There was no Prince in the family as yet, so the responsibilities of the Duchy fell upon Albert. He designed buildings of flats, with bathrooms, a thing unheard of until his day. These flats are still used in Kennington and are an example of what workmen's dwellings should be. Little wonder that the self-indulgent and complacent landlords of Albert's day were disturbed.

Albert continued his letters to his brother. '... All is well with us,' he wrote on November 24th. 'V. has not suffered the least since her confinement and feels as well as if nothing had happened. The little daughter is considered beautiful by all the ladies and she really is pretty. She is very lively. ...' Then he wrote a sentence which showed that the Queen had broken down the last barrier between them, as far as the affairs of Government were concerned. 'I have my hands very full, as I also look after V.'s political affairs. I should have preferred a boy, yet as it is, I thank heaven.' Eight days afterwards, he wrote: 'The little one, who has taken possession of her own rooms on the upper floor, looks blooming and grows visibly. I have a great deal to do and I hardly ever get out into the open air.'

The stories of Albert's tenderness to the Queen lend colour to the winter picture. They were still at Buckingham

Palace, waiting to go to Windsor for the Christmas holidays. The Queen wrote in her Journal of how 'No one but himself ever lifted her from her bed to her sofa,' and of how he would come from any part of the palace to be with her; of how he sat with her, in the darkened room, reading to her and writing for her, with a care for her which 'was like that of a mother.'

For the Christmas of 1840, at Windsor, 'three Christmas trees adorned the hall and everyone was merry and happy. Next year,' Albert wrote to Ernst, 'the little daughter will jump about the tree, as we used to do, not so very long ago.'¹²⁶

§ II — 1841

THE BIRTH of the Princess Royal in 1840 had made the Queen's happiness even more amazing and secure. Parliament was dissolved a few months after the baby was born. Prince Albert wrote of the occasion to the Duchess of Kent: 'It empties purses, sets families by the ears, demoralises the lower classes, and perverts many of the upper, whose character wants strength to keep them straight. . . . All the world is rushing out of town to agitate the country for and against.'¹²⁷

In August of 1841, Peel was in power. The battle over the Corn Laws had forced Melbourne and the Whigs to retire from the Queen's presence: now they were merely 'the opposition.' Melbourne himself had gently urged Victoria to hold out the olive branch to the Tories. The smoothness with which the change had been made was greatly due to Prince Albert, but Melbourne also had been magnanimous enough to urge Peel's virtues upon her. The Queen found her new Prime Minister awkward to talk to; his manner distressed her, but no more than her manner disturbed him. He was submissive enough to tell Anson that he would make

any personal sacrifice for the Queen 'except that of his honour.'¹²⁸ And in the same conversation, he said that he would 'waive every pretention to office, I declare to God! sooner than that my acceptance of it should be attended with any personal humiliation to the Queen.'¹²⁹

The scene in the first year of the Queen's reign, when Peel went to see her, was almost forgotten and now, when Stockmar reviewed the change, he said that Peel had shown a 'fairness and delicacy, an uprightness, conscientiousness, and circumspection, such as are not likely to be met with again in similar circumstances.'¹³⁰

The Prince's negotiations with Peel were made with quiet good sense. 'Of all the English Ministers with whom the Prince was brought into contact, it is known that he preferred the stately and upright commoner,' and, in return, 'Peel estimated and appreciated the Prince's character most truly and clearly.'¹³¹ Albert was able, through his closer understanding of Peel, to interpret him to the Queen. At first she closed her heart and her mind against the change. At this time, politics were affairs of personal prejudices to her, rather than of opinions. But, through Victoria's love for him, Albert had been able to bring a more sensible atmosphere into the negotiations. The Queen admitted to Lord Melbourne that her first interview with Peel had 'gone off well.'

The new Prime Minister came closer into the Court life by slow degrees, and, although the reserve between the Queen and himself was not entirely broken down, she was able, with Albert's intelligent guidance, to see that the Tories were not the knaves she had always supposed them to be.

With a curious and pleasant lack of party bitterness, Melbourne praised the Prince for his moderation and caution and he praised Peel too, for being 'a thorough gentleman.' Peel could afford to be a gentleman now, for there had been great changes since the day when he stood before the young,

crowned martinet. He had succeeded and as he himself said, he was now so strong that he could be magnanimous.¹³²

Albert was too busy to write to his brother until the new Ministers received their seals. ' . . . after much anxiety,' he wrote, 'everything turned out as Victoria and the country wished, and for what is good and right.'¹³³

Chapter Thirteen

§ 1 — 1841

IN LESS than two years, Prince Albert had broken down many of the prejudices against him. He had made a reputation for intelligence, tact, and unselfishness, but he was still anxious to gauge public opinion. So he took Anson into his confidence; they sat down to review the many steps Albert had made. Anson's delight was in discovering that Albert had 'completely foiled' all those people who intended from the beginning to keep him from being useful to the Queen. They had been afraid that he might touch upon her prerogatives. Anson was pleased, also, with what he described as 'The Queen's good sense.' She had seen that the Prince had no other object but her good. 'Cabinet Ministers treat him with deference and respect,' wrote Anson. 'Art and science look up to him as their especial patron. . . . The good and the wise look up to him with pride and gratitude. . . .'¹³⁴

The Queen's own feelings were expressed quite bluntly when she told her uncle that if Albert went to the North Pole, she would go with him.¹³⁵ Uncle Leopold commented upon his pupil's good judgment, and his mild and safe opinions.¹³⁶ On the last sad morning, when he bade good-bye to the Queen at Windsor, Melbourne had said: 'You will find a great support in the Prince: he is so able. You said when you were going to be married that he was perfection, which I thought a little exaggerated then, but really I think now that it is in some degree realised.'¹³⁷

The Queen and her Ministers were delighted with him. She wrote to her uncle: 'My dearest Angel is indeed a great comfort to me . . . abstaining as he ought from biasing me either way.' Peel, too, was enthusiastic. One day when he was going to introduce Lord Kingsdown to the Prince, he told him that he was to meet 'one of the most extraordinary

young men' he had ever met. It was Peel who had fought against the Prince's annuity, and he was 'not a little touched,' now that he was in power, to find that not 'a shade of personal soreness could be traced' in the Prince's demeanour towards him.¹³⁸

Albert had talked with bishops and peers and had won their esteem. He had excited Whigs and Tories to equal admiration. But Stockmar was not satisfied, nor did he spare Albert. The commendation of the English Ministers and the happiness of the Queen did not make the Prince's old master less critical of his pupil. When he was back in Coburg, he analysed the Prince's character and sent him a letter.¹³⁹ 'Let us but cleave devoutly but unceasingly to high thoughts and noble purposes,' Stockmar wrote, as if the boy had ever, in all his life, had anything but a high thought or a noble purpose. There was no praise, only a hard and censorious attitude towards everything Albert thought and did. He was required 'not to spare his own flesh, but to cut into his own faults as well as other men's.' He was urged to 'moral excellence.' He thought that Albert, at times, through a touch of weakness or vanity, inclined to 'rest satisfied with mere *talk*, where *action* is alone appropriate, and can alone be of any value.' The hammering, governing note of these letters shows a hardened Stockmar, returned to his Coburg harness, talking of self-control in alarming phrases—trying to tighten the bearing-rein upon an already sufficiently schooled young colt.

Albert could not understand the incessant lectures. He pleaded that he was already trying to be of as much use to Victoria as he could. It is almost pitiful to read the letters of this time and realise the loneliness in which the Prince was working. The Queen loved him, but the limitations of her knowledge prevented her from giving him much intellectual companionship. Melbourne had said to Anson: 'The Prince is bored with the sameness of his chess every evening.

He would like to bring literary and scientific people about the Court, vary the society, and infuse a more useful tendency into it.¹⁴⁰ But he added that the Queen had 'no fancy to encourage such people.' She was afraid of conversation with those who were intellectually superior to herself. The truth was that she was jealous of Albert, lest he should have any interests beyond her own understanding. Her love was possessive and faintly selfish. She was proud 'of the Prince's utter indifference to the attractions of all ladies.' Continuing this note, Anson adds: 'I told Her Majesty that these were early days to boast, which made her rather indignant. I think she is a little jealous of his talking much even to men.'¹⁴¹

§ II — 1841

IN JUNE of 1841 Albert was angry with his brother for showing their father a letter meant for him alone. 'This is the last time that I expose myself to such treatment,' he wrote. 'In future I shall write only about the weather, and leave you to perish in immorality, although my heart bleeds at the idea.'

Ernst was creating new scandals. He was ill, and his reputation had received a 'death blow.' So Albert added: 'Yet it would never occur to me to curse you or to take away from you the love I owe you as my brother. Believe me, you are not the first young man who worried about the sins of the world, and then fell into it and perished. . . . It is right that you drink Marienbad water, but keep quiet while doing so. That is the evil of your sufferings. They seem to be totally cured, you feel quite well and suddenly they appear again. Should it appear after your marriage, I should consider it the total ruin of your health, honour, moral and home happiness. Therefore, for God's sake don't play with your health.'

In his anxiety to rescue Ernst, Albert urged him to marry. 'I cannot imagine that the *chronique scandaleuse*, be it ever

so rich, could prevent you from living virtuously, with a virtuous wife.'

Then his anger abated and he wrote, on August 1st: '... You must not imagine that I am cold and unfriendly towards you. I may disapprove of some things you do. But that cannot alter my feelings for you. My love will always be the same.'

But forgiveness did not lessen Albert's certainty that his brother was best kept abroad. He withdrew an invitation for him to visit England, and told him that his presence was 'not desired.' The Queen was afraid that Ernst might instigate Albert against her... 'and that would rob her of the confidence I must have, to be able to do good... as you ask me for an open answer, I must say that nothing would be more disagreeable at present than your visit, or any visit in general.' It was the time of the change of ministry. Peel was coming into power and Albert thought that in this moment, 'the foundations of our existence will be laid for the next years. It will be necessary for us to be on the watch constantly. You would not only be in the way, but the political views you would be expected to have might harm me, and Victoria become anxious.'¹⁴²

§ III — 1841

THE MASS of people who peered through the railings of Buckingham Palace, were accustomed to the sight of the Princess Royal, plump and pink, nodding her feathers from her perambulator, waving her hands from a riot of muslin and rosettes. But their calm delight changed to excitement in September of 1841—the Queen appeared less in public and the mystery behind the palace windows drew them to the railings, hour after hour. Little whispered questions passed from mouth to mouth, until they reached the strip of red carpet at the Palace door.

When the Princess Royal had been born, the Queen wrote to her uncle of 'the great inconvenience of a *large* family . . . particularly to the country. . . . Men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this *very often*.'¹⁴³ She was contented with her one baby, pleased to see Albert dancing her in his arms.¹⁴⁴

In March, Albert had written to his brother from Claremont: ' . . . It will interest you to hear that we are expecting an increase of our family, Victoria is not very happy about it.' The letter which carried this news to Coburg was despondent. Albert added that he should like to be there 'because, in a small house, there is more cheerfulness to be found than there is in the big cold world, in which most people have hearts of stone.'

In November, the new baby was born. The glorious news brought sunshine into the winter gloom. England had an heir to its throne. Mothers sighed over the story of the little boy's arrival—the colour of his hair, the well-being of the two parents, who seemed so young and untaught to be shouldering such a burden. In December the precious bundle was taken to Windsor. England's Christmas prayers were mingled with the picture at the Castle. Bishops called down blessings 'on the young Sovereign and her cradled babe.'

There were scenes about a nursery fire, the pretty discoveries of parents doting upon their babies, and a jolly Christmas tree, blossoming with colour and light, bestowing its gifts upon everybody, from the old Duchess of Kent to the new Prince, from the Queen, to the humblest, wide-eyed scullery maid who came forward to accept a gift of warm woollen underwear from the Royal hand.

The Queen and the Prince extended their bounty to the poor of Windsor. They gave 'To each adult . . . 4 lbs. of beef, 2 lbs. of bread, 1 lb. of plum-pudding, a peck of potatoes and 2 pints of ale; children half the quantity; and a sack of coals to each family.'

The river was in flood; the country was grey and wet. But the town had dressed itself gaily, and there had been a ball in the town hall, with 'a profusion of everything that could be desired.' There were parties too, 'tastefully decorated and illuminated with appropriate transparencies.'¹⁴⁵

London was half forgotten. The Queen interested herself less and less about politics, and was 'a good deal occupied with the little Princess Royal,' who was beginning to 'assume companionable qualities.' The Queen and the Prince took walking exercise on the terraces, or planned new paths and gardens. The Prince 'enjoyed a run with his beagles . . . rode to Ascot to meet the Royal staghounds,' or 'enjoyed the sport of shooting.'¹⁴⁶ Sometimes he skated on the pond at Frogmore, the Queen going upon the ice, in a chair, after the German fashion.

The Duchess of Kent was with them during the Queen's convalescence. Albert's tenderness had brought her back into the picture and sometimes, while she drove in her pony phaeton, Albert would ride beside her and talk of Coburg and the valley whence they came to England.

Albert had retired from the party on Christmas Eve to write to his father, recalling the Christmases of his childhood. 'This is the dear Christmas Eve, on which I have so often listened with impatience for your step,' he wrote. 'To-day I have two children of my own to give presents to.' The two children were 'full of happy wonder at the German Christmas tree and its radiant candles.'

Then came New Year's Eve and the clock striking twelve. A flourish of trumpets was sounded. Next day the Queen wrote that Albert turned pale and had tears in his eyes and pressed her hand very warmly. She was touched, for she felt that he must be thinking 'of his dear native country, which he has left for me.'

Chapter Fourteen

§ I — 1842

ALBERT AND Victoria were happy to be at Windsor, like 'prisoners freed from some dungeon.' As soon as she was well enough, Victoria wrote to her uncle of the little boy, so 'wonderfully strong . . . with a very large nose, and a pretty little mouth. I hope and pray that he may be like his dearest Papa.'

In that hope lay the key to the relationship between the Queen and her son in the years that followed. King Edward could never have been like his father, in spite of the Queen's dogged efforts to make him so. The Hanoverian blood flowed richly in the new baby.

§ II

THE POLITICIANS were quiet: everybody was happy, everybody but Stockmar. He was violent because ever since the fall of his Government, Lord Melbourne had continued to write letters to the Queen. Stockmar had been to the house of a friend in London and there a stranger had come up to him and said: 'So I find the Queen is in daily correspondence with Lord Melbourne. . . . Don't you believe that Lord Melbourne has lost his influence over the Queen's mind. . . .' Stockmar had answered: 'I don't believe a word of it,' but he saw in the incident a reason for writing a candid letter to Melbourne. Peel had suspected the correspondence and had threatened Stockmar that if he learned of the Queen taking Melbourne's advice, he would not remain in office another hour, whatever the consequences of his resignation might be. Stockmar appealed to Melbourne: '. . . Would you have it said that Sir Robert Peel failed in his trial, merely because

the Queen alone was not fair to him, and that principally you had aided her in the game of dishonesty?'¹⁴⁷

The Baron's protest had little or no effect upon Melbourne. Anson's memorandum of four weeks later says: 'The Melbourne correspondence still is carried on, but I think not in its pristine vigour by any means. He has taken no notice of the Baron's remonstrance to him. . . .'

§ III — 1842

BEING A MOTHER, a wife and a Sovereign was sufficient occupation for the Queen. She still recoiled from the intellectual company for which Prince Albert had an appetite. During the early months of his régime, Peel came to understand the Prince's need and he set about using Albert's artistic discrimination for the country's benefit. They had already corresponded on the *Nibelungenlied*; they had exchanged books and they had found a dozen mutual interests, beyond Corn Laws and disgruntled workmen.

One of Peel's first actions was to appoint the Prince as President of the Fine Arts Commission. When Peel announced to the House of Commons that the Prince's name and authority were to be given to the Commission there was 'cordial satisfaction in every quarter of the House.'¹⁴⁸ This new interest opened a new door for Albert. He welcomed the opportunity of being 'more intimately acquainted with some of the most distinguished men of the day.'¹⁴⁹

The Prince was formal and self-conscious in his interviews. Old courtiers recalled the military stiffness of his manner, but if he maintained a distance in conversation, it was because of his shyness and his sense of being a foreigner. Anson observed this coldness and explained it in a note.¹⁵⁰ A 'by no means good-natured' observer had said to him: 'That it was most remarkable the Prince should have been now nearly two years in his most diffi-

cult position, and had never given cause for one word to be said against him in any respect.' By this time, Anson had come to know Albert's innermost anxieties. Their hours of work together had made them into devoted friends and Anson, remembering the circumspection and care with which his master approached each new problem, said that the inevitable result was the reserve of manner which strangers were apt to mistake for coldness and hauteur. But it was not always so. Sometimes there were interviews in which intellectual men could break through the Prince's defences. Sir Charles Eastlake, who was obliged to meet the Prince in connection with the Fine Arts Commission, was such a man. He penetrated the Prince's shyness, and in describing their first interview, he wrote: 'He stood, kneeling with one knee on the chair, while he talked, so that we were at close quarters and in a strong light, which showed his beautiful face to great advantage. . . . There was nothing in his exterior so striking as his face. . . . He soon put me at ease by his pleasing manner. . . . Two or three times I quite forgot who he was, he talked so naturally and argued so fairly. . . .'

Sir Charles Eastlake felt that he should make a stand against the introduction of foreign artists. He was surprised and delighted to find that the Prince agreed with him. He was pleased also to see 'how perfectly the Prince speaks in English as to idioms, and the accent is scarcely ever perceptibly foreign. . . . His features are tranquil in talking. The absence of pride and even of the ceremonious reserve which "hedges" Royalty, is very engaging.'¹²¹ Albert had no high-minded ideas about commercial needs in art. He comforted Eastlake by saying: 'There are two great auxiliaries in this country which seldom fail to promote the success of any scheme—fashion and high example.' So he promised that the aims of the Commission should be supported by both the Queen and himself.

§ IV — 1842

TOWARDS THE end of January, the baby Prince was christened in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. Victoria and Albert were overwhelmed with congratulations from everybody, except a disgruntled grandfather in Coburg. The old Duke was annoyed about the arrangements for the christening and he reproached Albert very seriously because the child was not to be called Ernst and because neither he nor his son were to be Godfathers. Albert wrote to his brother: 'The Godfathers are: the King of Prussia, the Duke of Cambridge and Uncle Ferdinand.¹⁵² . . . Papa is very angry on account of the choice of the King of Prussia. . . . Of course Papa is right when he says that the King of Saxony had a right to be Godfather, but he forgets that the Anglican Church does not allow Catholics to be Godfathers.'¹⁵³

The young Prince was born at a time of widespread discontent. Peel had not calmed the artisans in Lancashire or the miners in Wales. Wages were low, food was dear and there was little work. Ireland was so lawless that half the home forces were needed to suppress the rebels. The other half found it difficult to maintain the law in England, for the Chartist agitators were rampant in every part of the country. Soldiers abroad were building and holding the Empire against fierce revolt. There was war in China and the insurgents in the Cape and the West Indies were kept in subjection only by force. Politicians were nervous about the wayward moods of France and the Americans were disgruntled because England claimed the right to search their vessels for slave traders who might be Britishers, hiding under the American flag. More soldiers were needed, at a time when our revenue showed 'a deficit for the year of 2,500,000*l*, swollen to nearly 5,000,000*l* by the expenses of the Afghanistan expedition.'¹⁵⁴

But England forgot its troubles for a day or two, for the great occasion of the christening. Here was splendour to dazzle the eyes of Princes and excite politicians, who could see foreign policies wrapped up in the choice of Godfathers.

The Court walked down from the Castle to St. George's Chapel, the Queen in her Garter robes. She wore 'a circlet, earrings and necklace of diamonds of the most costly description.'¹⁵⁵ There were soldiers and Highlanders, and the sunny sky shivered with cannon shots. The baby Prince Edward was christened, behaving, *The Times* reporter wrote, 'with true Princely decorum.'

When the precious baby had been put to bed, Albert and Victoria went into the nursery for one brief and proud moment. The splendid company waited for them in the banqueting hall. The salvers and goblets were gilt and the vast chandeliers were reflected in the mirrors from which they rose in branches of gold. George the Fourth's snuff boxes had been melted down to make one salver worth ten thousand guineas.

Amid all this expensive panoply, the Queen came in, Peers of the realm bowing to the right and left of her, a tiny figure in white satin, with a wreath upon her head. Albert was with her, unobtrusive, but certainly with her. She walked across the room to the colossal punch bowl, took a glass and drank to the health of her baby and her heir.

Baroness Bunsen watched the Queen talking eagerly with the King of Prussia, 'laughing heartily (no *company* laugh) at things he said to entertain her.'¹⁵⁶ Two great Protestant monarchs were friends. The King saw only the glories of England: the latent discontents of the Midlands did not intrude into the Thames Valley. He saw the Queen open Parliament next day.

As the gorgeous car of State,
By noble coursers born exultingly,

Drew near, the people's acclamations rose,
Loud, and re-echoed wildly to the sky.

He went back to Prussia, confident that he had made two new friends for himself and his country.

§ V — 1842

IN THE new year, even Stockmar praised Albert's achievement. Before the Baron left England for Coburg in 1842, Lord Aberdeen told him how gratified Ministers were 'to perceive that the Queen leant upon the Prince's judgment, and showed an obvious desire that he should share her duties.'¹⁵⁷ At last Albert had 'the moral status and influence to which he was entitled.'¹⁵⁸

The reforms the Prince brought into the Court were unobtrusive and there are few dramatic phrases to quote in evidence of the changes he made. But he had conferred in secret with the Baron, who knew England and its ways well enough to be sensible of the danger of any innovations which would offend the dignity of men in office. The Prince worked quietly and 'recommended that the necessary reforms should emanate from the Officers . . . themselves.' The relations of the departments of the Court were sometimes fantastic. The Lord Chamberlain cleaned the inside of the windows and the Woods and Forests Department cleaned the outside. As they never chose the same day, the Queen never had completely clean windows. This was only a small trouble in the chaos of mismanagement. But Martin tells us that the Prince's patience and persistence slowly changed many things. ' . . . All that was hoped from the change was more than realised and the Prince had, from this time, the satisfaction of being permanently relieved from the multitude of these distressing cares.'¹⁵⁹ He was ruthless in his economies. As was common in several other big houses

in England, candles were never used more than once in the Palace and thus, thousands of candles, with the tips slightly burned, were confiscated as perquisites every week. The Prince changed this. He discovered and forbade mysterious expenditures for wine and, in a few years, he saved enough money out of the Queen's income to pay about two hundred thousand pounds for Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight.

There was something feminine in the way Albert enjoyed his victories. He had none of the vanity which so often destroys men at the point of achievement. He was content to hear the Queen praised, provided he knew in his heart that he had gained his own ends. All through the year of 1842, new changes brought new peace to the Court. Baroness Lehzen went back to Hanover and with her went one of the most unfortunate influences in the Queen's married life. She may have been excellent as a governess, but she had no place in the family of the Queen and Prince. They were engrossed by their children: they were eager to make gardens and buy new houses. They were excited by the pretty sayings of their babies, and between them there had grown up an intimacy from which Lehzen was completely excluded. Albert would frequently return to the Palace from his expeditions and walk through the Queen's dressing-room 'with that bright, loving smile with which he ever greeted her: telling her where he had been—of the new buildings he had seen—of the studios, etc., he had visited.'¹⁶⁰

Victoria relied upon Albert more and more. It was through her adoration of him that she was willing to relegate Lehzen into the shadows. The Queen may have thought herself responsible for the change, but it was the Prince's patience which removed her, without any scenes or reproaches. Melbourne had thought that the time of the change of Government was the suitable moment in which to expel Lehzen. Albert was more patient. He waited, chose the right

moment and spoke to the Queen gently. Lehzen's dominion ended and Albert himself took over her duties.

Albert had also objected to Melbourne's letters to the Queen. But he was patient, and slowly, by himself providing those male influences which the Queen had been accustomed to find in Melbourne, he induced her to exclude politics from the unwise correspondence.

Greville noted the change in the relationship between the Queen and her old Prime Minister. In 1854, he said that they corresponded until the end of Melbourne's life but not about politics. Greville added that it was 'curious as showing how gradually the Prince's influence increased.'¹⁶¹

In her adoration, the Queen accepted everything Albert did as faultless. He was still young, beautiful and kind. Her letters to her uncle were full of thanks to God for the blessing of her husband. She became less selfish and her early education lost its narrowing influence. She had never known anybody who was both near and dear to her in the same measure as Albert. The love which was passionate at first now became obedient, mentally as well as physically. In the Queen's eyes, everything Albert did was wise and cautious. Up to this time, he had not made one mistake. He could make decisions, with strange, quick wisdom. There was the occasion when a special anthem was composed for the Prince's christening. Albert decreed: ' . . . no Anthem. If the service ends by an Anthem, we shall all go out criticising the music. We will have something we all know—something in which we can all join—something devotional. The Hallelujah Chorus; we shall all join in that, with our hearts.'¹⁶²

Victoria wrote in her Journal: 'I *know what REAL happiness is*.'¹⁶³ This was true. Happiness was coming to them all the more securely because it came through tribulation. There was nobody in the world Victoria envied. Philosophers more simple than those of to-day have told us that

character is richest when it is developed through love. The Queen had begun by loving Albert emotionally. Now she loved him with a devout regard for his religious consciousness and for his intellectual gifts. Through such love, her own character changed. Her enmity against her mother died and the old Duchess, sad, and more dear than in the days of her battles with the King, was drawn back into her life. Old enmities were forgotten. The Duke of Wellington, with whom Victoria had been so incensed, carried the Sword of State when the baby Prince was christened. Albert taught the Queen to see that motives mattered more than actions. Her own character flowered, and with it came a dignity and 'presence' and the kind of beauty which made it possible for a little woman to strike awe into men. She lived to make Bismarck sweat with fear, before he opened the door to go in to her. She impressed the Czar of Russia. Lady Lyttelton observed the 'vein of iron' running through her 'most extraordinary character.'¹⁶⁴ But there was a vein of tenderness too, which had never been there before.

•

Chapter Fifteen

§ 1 — 1842

IN FEBRUARY, Albert was elated by the news of his brother's engagement to Princess Alexandrina of Baden. The Queen mastered some of her prejudice against Ernst, and, in writing to her uncle, she described the marriage as 'a *great great delight* to us; thank God! . . . Alexandrina is said to be really *so perfect*.' She had received a letter from the Princess and she thought it 'sensibly and religiously' written. 'I have begged Ernst beforehand to pass his honeymoon with us and I beg you to urge him to do it; for he witnessed our first happiness, and we must therefore witness his.'¹⁸⁵

It was easy for the Queen to write of her innermost feelings, but the Prince never wrote letters which were ecstatic or self-revealing. As he had never complained to his brother of his early life in England, so he also said little about his increasing happiness. But he gave his brother some candid advice about marriage. 'Do not leave your wife alone at home, while you go after your own pleasures,' he wrote. 'Married, and with your own wife, there is more chance of success for you here.'

The old Duke had given Ernst the Castle of Kallenberg in the country near Coburg. 'I should have everything made elegantly and nice,' Albert wrote. 'If you always wish to have everything in the latest fashion and go to races and hunt, you will not have enough. Here, people ruin themselves with such things. What does it bring you?'

' . . . Papa must understand that now, you are going to begin a more independent life. . . . In your own happy home, I see the only blessing for his coming old age. . . . By constantly changing his home and habits, he has not only lost much time but he has also destroyed the delicate blossom of home life. Often he feels it. Do try and make a new home for

him. . . . I meant to give you a centrepiece as a wedding present, but as you wish to have a travelling carriage, I shall have it made at once and see that it is made very well. Victoria and I intend giving Alexandrina some fine jewels.'¹⁶⁶

Ernst and his bride arrived in England and in July they were at Claremont, where their Uncle Leopold had lived with Princess Charlotte. The Queen was charmed with her new sister and thought her 'a most amiable, sensible and gentle creature, and without being really handsome, very pretty and pleasing.'¹⁶⁷

§ II — 1842

MENDELSSOHN WROTE a pleasant account of his visit to Buckingham Palace in 1842. He was shown into a room facing the garden, where he found the Prince alone. 'The Queen came in, also alone, in a simple morning dress. I begged that the Prince would first play me something, so that, as I said, "I might boast about it in Germany." He played a chorale by Herz, with the pedals, so charmingly and clearly and correctly as would have done credit to any professional. Then it was my turn, and I began my chorus from *St. Paul*, "How lovely are the messengers." Before I got to the end of the first verse they both joined in the chorus. . . . The Queen asked if I had written any new songs, and said she was very fond of singing my published ones. "You should sing one to him," said Prince Albert; and, after a little begging, she said she would. . . . We proceeded to the Queen's sitting-room, where there was a piano.'

The Duchess of Kent joined them and then the Queen sang the '*Pilger's Spruch*' and '*Lass Mich Nur*' 'quite faultlessly and with charming feeling and expression. I thought to myself, one must not pay too many compliments on such an occasion, so that I merely thanked her a great many times, upon which she said: "Oh! if I only had not been so

frightened. Generally I have such long breath." Then I praised her heartily and with the best conscience in the world. . . .'

Prince Albert also sang and then, when they asked Mendelssohn to improvise for them, he found himself 'in the best mood for it. . . . They followed me with such intelligence and attention that I felt more at ease than I ever did when improvising to an audience.'

Artists also came to the Palace. The Prince had been delighted by the work he was able to do as President of the Fine Arts Commission. It was not enough for him that the new frescoes for the Houses of Parliament should be decorative, so he urged the artists to paint a moral into their story.

Albert was fond of fresco painting and he sought to make it more popular by designing a pavilion for the grounds of Buckingham Palace. He had already enlivened the gardens with birds and new trees. From the ornate Georgian drawing-rooms of the Palace, the Prince could look out upon a scene which was incongruous in its metropolitan setting. The lake was wide, the trees were big and healthy; hundreds of birds sang the tunes of the countryside rather than the sadder, smoky chirps of London. Only when a London mist settled into the garden did one suspect that this was not a country house, set in its own, far-spreading park. In the winter, the Prince skated on the lake. Once he fell into the water and, if it had not been for the presence of mind of the Queen, he might never have been rescued. He loved the garden and when he thought of a pavilion, a new, bright summer-house, with frescoes by all the great living artists, he drew his plans and imagined his colours with great delight. Landseer and his contemporaries were to paint wonderful panels, of subjects both moral and beautiful.

Every day, the Prince and the Queen hurried into the garden to watch the artists at work. Among them was Uwins and, in a letter which he wrote, he expressed his delight with

his Royal Masters. Their 'intellectual acquirements' greatly increased his respect for them. 'History, literature, science and art seem to have lent their stores to form the mind of the Prince,' he wrote. 'He is really an accomplished man, and withal, possesses so much good sense and consideration, that, taken apart from his playfulness and good humour, he might pass for an aged and experienced person, instead of a youth of two or three and twenty.' He thought the Queen also intelligent, her observations very acute, and her judgment apparently matured 'beyond her age.'

Uwins thought them an example to the age. He commended them because they breakfasted, heard morning prayers and were out in the gardens 'before half-past nine o'clock—sometimes earlier.' He saw them too, in the evening, in moments 'snatched from state, parade and ceremony,' enjoying 'each other's society in the solitude of the garden.'

The pavilion grew. The new Victorian art was blossoming in other gardens; pretty sentimentalities gave a new kind of excitement to painting and decoration. The first Victorian daughters were pressing pansies in books and embroidering valentines. Great ladies saw the Queen drawing and etching and, when they went back to their country houses, they taught their children to do the same. Bunches of precious flowers were painted upon glass, mittened fingers made magic patterns of minute, coloured ribbons, beads were assembled in the shape of flowers and birds, and dutiful daughters copied the iris and the columbine, the rose and the waterlily, in translucent coloured wax.

§ III — 1842

IN MAY of 1842, a 'thorough scamp' named John Francis fired a shot at the Queen. She met the occasion with Hanoverian courage: a few hours afterwards she drove out again, while the man was still at large, giving him the opportunity of

firing once more. This he did, thus delivering himself up to the law. Prince Albert shared the danger, and afterwards wrote to his father of the 'dreadful occurrence.' He was returning with the Queen from the Chapel Royal, driving past a crowd of spectators under the trees, when he saw a man step out from the crowd and present a pistol full at him. 'He was some two paces from us,' wrote Albert. 'I heard the trigger snap, but it must have missed fire. I turned to Victoria, who was seated on my right hand, and asked her: "Did you hear that?" She had been bowing to the people on the right, and had observed nothing.'

They returned to the Palace. Even the footmen at the back of the carriage had not noticed anything amiss. So long as the man was at large, he would be a danger. The Queen and the Prince 'felt sure he would again come skulking about the Palace,' so they drove out, to give him the temptation which might betray him to the police. Albert continued his letter: 'We . . . gave orders to drive faster than usual and for the two equerries . . . to ride close to the carriage. You may imagine that our minds were not very easy. We looked behind every tree, and I cast my eyes round in search of the rascal's face. . . .'

On the way home, a shot was fired at them, about five paces off. 'It was the fellow with the same pistol—a little, swarthy, ill-looking rascal. The shot must have passed under the carriage. . . .' The wretch was caught, tried, and deported for life. 'I was really not at all frightened,' wrote the Queen to her uncle. 'Thank God, my Angel is also well.'

Again in July, 'a hunchbacked wretch' tried to shoot at the carriage in which the Queen, Prince Albert and King Leopold were sitting. The pistol missed fire and they drove on to the Palace.

Peel was in Cambridge, and when the news came to him, he abandoned his plans and hurried up to London. The strain of being so near to tragedy broke down any defences

the Prime Minister may have retained. He stood in the room, waiting, and when he saw the door open and the Queen come in, he was unable to control his emotions. He bowed before her and burst into tears.¹⁶⁸ A common danger made them both more human. Peel was governing a country traversed by disorderly mobs. Like the Queen, he lived in danger of his life.

A few months afterwards, the Prime Minister's Secretary was assassinated, in mistake for Peel himself. This time, the Queen's heart was softened. Her sympathy was roused and she wrote of Peel as '... a great statesman, a man who thinks but little of party, and never of himself.'¹⁶⁹

§ IV — 1842-48

DURING HER reign the Queen spent less than five weeks in Ireland, but her visits to Scotland covered almost seven years. Her love for Scotland began when she went there with the Prince, for the first time, in 1842. This was their first romantic adventure. It was, in a sense, their honeymoon. The country was new to both of them and the Queen quickly gave her heart to the Highlands, because Albert saw in them so much of the beauty he had left in Thuringia. It was not likely that the Irish temperament could please them. Irish problems bored, when they did not distress them. Irish people eluded the German conception of human nature.

The Queen's Journal tells us how they steamed up the coast of Scotland, with their imposing squadron of nine ships. The shore was bright with bonfires.

Every year after this first visit they went to some part of Scotland. Albert was pleased because so many of the people looked like Germans. The Queen tasted her first oatmeal porridge and she thought it 'very good.' They both came to be 'quite fond of the bagpipes,' and she loved the Highlanders, because they were 'such a chivalrous, fine, active

people.' When they went out together upon a lake, the boatman sang Gaelic boat songs to them, in the language which was 'so guttural and yet so soft.' One Sunday morning, Victoria sat beside Albert and read him three cantos of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. They looked at old prints together, just as they had looked at drawings on the sofa at Kensington, when they were children. Their mutual interests developed. While Albert went out in the morning and returned 'dreadfully sunburned,' the Queen painted and sketched the scenes around her, the little huts 'so low, so full of peat smoke . . . the old women washing potatoes in the river, with their dresses tucked up almost to the knees.'¹⁷⁰

When they drove along the Kingussie Road together, they saw the meadows, 'with people making hay, and cottages sprinkled sparingly about,' and they were reminded 'much of Thüringen.' Albert learned Gaelic from the gillies. He found deer stalking to be one of the most fatiguing, but one of the most interesting of pursuits.

'Oh! what can equal the beauties of nature,' the Queen wrote, naively, in her Journal. As their ponies clambered up the slopes, they would pause here and there, the Queen to gather cairngorms beside the road and the Prince to search for rock crystals in the streams. Sometimes Albert would see ptarmigan and run off to shoot them. They would lunch alone on high peaks, 'upon a seat in a little nook.' When Albert left her, to shoot on the hills, Victoria would wait for him beside the road, throwing stones into a stream.

She could not bear him to be away all day for the hunting at Windsor, and she was jealous of the time he spent stalking and shooting in Scotland. Even on the days when she sketched, she said she would have enjoyed it still more if Albert had been with her 'the whole time.' 'I wish we could have had Landseer with us to sketch our party,' she wrote.

Victoria was alone with Albert, away from the politicians and the tiresome relations, the discontented masses south of

the Border and the whole irksome monotony of affairs. She found it 'quite romantic . . . not a house, not a creature near us, but the pretty Highland sheep, with their horns and black faces.' When they came back to the English coast again, it appeared 'terribly flat.'

Chapter Sixteen

§ 1 — 1843

STOCKMAR CAME from Coburg in April to find that a few months had wrought a great change in Albert.¹⁷¹ He thought him well and happy, though he frequently looked pale and worried. Then, as if he saw danger in his own sympathy, Stockmar tempered his observations. He admitted that Albert was rapidly showing what was in him, that he was full of the practical talent which enabled him to see the essential points of a question.¹⁷²

Albert still had many fields to conquer. Princess Alice was to be born in April, so the Prince was obliged to take the Queen's place at the usual spring levées. There was an old and unapproachable aristocracy in England which still resented the intrusion of what they thought to be a bourgeois court. When it was realised that the Queen would not be able to attend the levées, they made their excuses and stayed away.¹⁷³ The Queen was anxious: she would not have Albert snubbed by any English Peer. Peel reassured her that only a 'person of deranged intellect'¹⁷⁴ could have a 'hostile feeling' towards Albert, but he added that the attitude of the extremists might be considered by not insisting that they should kneel and kiss his hand.¹⁷⁵

Princess Alice was born in April. Albert wrote to his brother:¹⁷⁶ 'To-day I can send you and dear Alexandrina the news you have certainly awaited for some days. At four o'clock this morning, Victoria was confined with a little daughter. She suffered much, but for only a short time, and now she feels as well as can be expected. The child is said to be very pretty. . . . Victoria is getting better very quickly and to-day she is already lying on her sofa.

'The day after to-morrow the funeral of the Duke of Sussex is to take place.¹⁷⁷ I shall be present. It will be a

long and fatiguing ceremony. We are going in long cloaks and wide-brimmed hats. Wylde, in black habit habillé, shoes and stockings, hair-bag, etc., will carry my train. "*Il n'y a qu'un pas du sublime au ridicule*".

A few weeks afterwards, Albert lost his red finch. 'It always made me happy, when the little bird sang "*Guter Mond, du-gehst so stille!*"'¹⁷⁸ he wrote to Ernst.

§ II — 1843

THE QUEEN's uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, was now the popular King of Hanover and his people were prospering under his rule. But his German successes did not diminish his resentment against the new Court in England. In the beginning, he had contrived, with the Duke of Sussex and the Cambridges, to make the question of precedence as unpleasant as possible for Albert. The Duchess of Cambridge had gone so far as to refuse to stand up at dinner when Prince Albert's health was proposed.¹⁷⁹

Now and again the King of Hanover came to England to attend a celebration, but he never missed an opportunity to disturb the peace of the life at Buckingham Palace. When he came for the christening of Princess Alice, in June, he arrived in a hackney coach, an hour after the banquet was over. Albert thought that he looked very miserable and old, but he was in a good humour and full of tenderness, in the beginning. He was received better than was expected and he went much into society. 'What cannot be agreeable for the Hanoverians,' Albert wrote, 'is, that he took his seat in the House of Lords and swore the oath of fidelity and obedience. This is not wise, to be united with the idea of sovereignty.'¹⁸⁰

But the King's 'tenderness' was short-lived. A few weeks afterwards he attended the marriage of Princess Augusta of Cambridge.¹⁸¹ 'It almost came to a fight with the King,'

Albert wrote to his brother.¹⁸² 'He insisted on having the place at the altar, where we stood. He wanted to drive me away and, against all custom, he wanted to accompany Victoria and lead her. I was to go behind him.

'I was forced to give him a strong punch and drive him down a few steps, where the First Master of Ceremonies took him and led him out of the Chapel.

'We had a second scene, when he would not allow me to sign the register with Victoria. He laid his fist on the book. We manœuvred round the table and Victoria had the book handed to her across the table. Now the table was between us and he could see what was being done. After a third trial to force Victoria to do what he commanded, but in vain, he left the party in great wrath. Since then, we let him go, and happily, he fell over some stones in Kew and damaged some ribs.'

§ III — 1843

ANOTHER YEAR closed and when December came, it seemed that the Queen and her Consort had passed their examination with honours. They were still absurdly young. At an age when many of his contemporaries were still dreaming upon the banks of the Cam, Albert had wrestled with the suspicions of a new country; he had mastered the details of government and he had restrained a self-willed woman. The tempers which were attractive in Victoria as a girl, had now to be displaced by new accomplishments. In 1843, we find a new Victoria. Her letters were interesting and full of good judgment and her personality was amazing; she intensified all occasions with her vitality. She loved Albert devoutly. There had been something imperious and yet humiliating in the idea which had possessed her when she had proposed to him in 1839. Four years had broken down this imperiousness, as far as Albert was concerned, and she had come to enjoy his success more than her own. When he was received with

affection, in the provincial towns, she was exultant. Her 'beloved Angel' was triumphant. She set up a chair of State for him in the House of Lords, the same as her own.¹⁸³ He was 'as much King' as she could make him.¹⁸⁴ 'I doubt whether anybody ever did love or respect another as I do my dear Angel,'¹⁸⁵ she wrote to her uncle. Ireland might be angry still; O'Connell might be waving his firebrand in defiance of her Crown; there might be twisted idiots hiding in the gardens, waiting to threaten her life, but with Albert near her, nothing mattered. 'We can bear all,' she wrote to the Belgian King.

Victoria was becoming a spectacular Queen. A new, dynamic force impelled her, and her pride became power. Petulance faded and patience was born. Five years ago, ministers had bowed to her because she was the Queen. Now, when she came into a room, walking with the wonderful poise which never left her, people bowed before her because of her own greatness. She was happy. No tangle of psychological theories is needed to understand her development. Love had conquered all things. The force in her was confidence—the inevitable result of being a happy woman. In November, Albert wrote to Ernst: 'Victoria has greatly improved and has become very reasonable and good natured.'¹⁸⁶

The Prince, who gave the Queen her power and happiness, was but dimly seen, following behind her. There was nothing spectacular about him, except that he was good-looking. His virtues had no superficial adornments to show them off. He stood in the scene inviolate and expressionless. Duty had brought him to England. His reward was domestic contentment and the knowledge that his power was no less awful for being unseen.

§ IV — 1843

WHEN THE year was over, Stockmar paid his first whole-hearted compliment to his pupil. 'You have availed your-

self, with tact and success, of the first opportunity¹⁸⁷ that has come in your way. The results are before us. Take then, in good part, my hearty congratulations upon them.'¹⁸⁸

Albert's patience brought him many little victories during 1843. He went to France with the Queen, finding the old King 'in the third heaven of rapture.' The whole family had received them with affection and the French were 'unflagging in their courtesy. . . . The public here are thoroughly satisfied with the excursion.'¹⁸⁹ Louis Philippe's family had had a strong feeling that for the past thirteen years they had been placed under a ban. So this compliment and visit from 'the most powerful Sovereign in Europe' delighted them.

But it was within the boundaries of the Kingdom that Albert had made his greatest success. He had gone to Cambridge to receive the degree of LL.D. The undergraduates had cheered him. They were all 'young people' who, in time, would 'have a certain part to play; they are the rising generation'¹⁹⁰ said the Queen when she wrote her delight to her uncle. One of the Professors, too, was pleased with Albert's 'good general knowledge of the old world.'

At Windsor, Albert had taken over the home farm and the year's accounts showed that it had made a profit. The children were happy. Victoria was 'running and jumping in the flower garden,' and to her delight, the Queen saw that Bertie was growing to be like his father. There were tender letters from Melbourne and bunches of daphne from his garden, 'not so fine as they were.' He was older and his spirit flagged a little. But the Queen stirred him into his old form when she suggested that dry champagne was perhaps unwholesome. He was 'incredulous' and he assured her 'that the united opinion of the whole College of Physicians and of Surgeons' would not persuade him 'upon these points.'¹⁹¹

In November, Albert hunted with the Belvoir and everybody was delighted with his performance. The Queen announced to Leopold that Albert's riding so boldly had 'made

such a sensation that it has been written all over the country, and they make much more of it than if he had done some great act!' She was delighted because it had put an end to all impertinent sneering about his riding.¹⁹² Here at last was a virtue which Englishmen could appreciate. Intellectual merit and artistic eagerness were pretty enough as affectations for professors and women. But such attributes had never been looked upon as part of the paraphernalia of an English gentleman. 'The Prince rode admirably,' wrote Anson, himself a fox-hunting man. The aristocracy began to think a little more highly of Albert's 'capacity for Government which in the minds of English people is still associated with a knack of catching balls, jumping ditches, and pulling live foxes to pieces.'¹⁹³

In his letters to his brother, Albert made no boasts and few complaints. In August, he was 'exhausted from parties, inspections of docks, wharfs, men of war, etc. etc.', but in November, he was delighted because the Nemours came to stay. He found Nemours 'become much quieter than he was. We fought out many political fights, in great honesty and openness, and understood each other very well. . . .'

Christmas came, and the trees were ordered for the children. 'It seems to me,' he wrote, 'as if it was not long ago that we were enchanted at the sight of *our* trees and especially you, enjoying the beloved quince-bread. Yesterday I had my first fall, while hunting, and I fell into a ditch near the railway station at Slough.'¹⁹⁴

•

Chapter Seventeen

§ I — 1844

PRINCE ALBERT'S father died in January of the New Year and Ernst became Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Albert wrote to his brother 'with a broken heart and bitter tears.' 'We got up happy and in best spirits this morning and then—all those black-rimmed letters came from members of the French family expressing their sympathy with our great loss. This is the only news we have yet had.

'How I should like to be with you and weep with you and see the beloved face once more, though it is cold!!'¹⁹⁵

'... We have no home any more, and this is a terrible idea. ... I shall never see him again, never see my home with him as I knew and loved it and as I grew up in it. This is a break that you cannot feel in the same manner. ... I am far away from you, but the whole love of a brother fills my heart, and I shall always stand by you with advice and deed. ... Poor subjects, be a father to them; the few who followed me here cannot stop their tears. Our poor little children do not know why we cry and they ask us why we are in *black*.

'... Victoria weeps with me, for me and for all of you. This is a great comfort for me. And your dear Alexandrina will weep with you. Let us take great care of these two jewels; let us love and protect them, as in them we shall find happiness again.'¹⁹⁶

'... Victoria thanks you for your last letter. She sends you a pin with a curl of dear Father's hair. The reliques gave us much pleasure. How often have I seen the fruit knife in his hand!'¹⁹⁷

The Victorian fashion of mourning the dead had begun. Death wore new accoutrements; bereavement took on a new importance. In the shadow of black-edged paper, jet bracelets and impenetrable veils, sinners became saints in the

memory of the mourners. So the Duke's misdeeds were forgotten.

The Queen wrote that Albert's grief was great and touching. In his letter, Albert wrote a sentence which showed that there was no longer any barrier between the Queen and himself. He said that Victoria was the treasure upon which his whole existence rested. 'The relation in which we stand to one another leaves nothing to desire. It is a union of heart and soul and is therefore noble. . . .' ¹⁹⁸

He felt his loss deeply, with the 'great cold public' around, 'insensible as stone.'¹⁹⁹ But when Stockmar wrote to him of his goodness—'a good son' who could have no 'reason to feel remorse,'²⁰⁰ and when he showed his nervousness over Ernst's ability and character, Albert's response was willing and unquestioning. He would add Coburg to his burdens.

'I have regained my composure,' he wrote to Stockmar, on February 9th. 'A new epoch has commenced in my life, not indeed in action and in aim, but in my emotional life (Gefühlsleben). My youth, with all the recollections linked with it, has been buried. . . .' ²⁰¹

Albert went to Coburg in March, to see his brother established and to equip himself with the knowledge which would make it possible for him to help Ernst in the future.²⁰² Up to this time, Albert had not been separated from the Queen since the day of their marriage, so there had been no letters exchanged between them. But the letters written to Victoria, during this first separation, show a tender Albert, a boy grown to be a lover, warm in his entreaties and endearments.

'My own darling,' he wrote, from Dover Harbour.²⁰³ 'I have been here about an hour, and regret the lost time which I might have spent with you. . . . Poor child! You will, while I write, be getting ready for luncheon, and you will find a place vacant where I sat yesterday. In your heart, however,

I hope my place will not be vacant. . . . You are even now half a day nearer to seeing me again; by the time you get this letter, you will be a whole one—thirteen more, and I am again within your arms. . . . Your most devoted Albert.’ There was a postscript: ‘. . . I cannot go to bed without writing two words more. I occupy your old room. . . . We had a rather unpleasant voyage. I kept my seat on one spot all the way with my eyes shut, but I was far from easy in my mind. . . .’ In Cologne, he found her picture hung everywhere, very prettily wreathed with laurel, and he was delighted because she looked down from the walls, upon his tête-à-tête with his equerry.

Two days afterwards, Albert was in Gotha. Ernst met him some miles out of the town. ‘Oh! how many varied emotions overwhelm me! Remembrance, sorrow, joy, all these together produce a peculiar sadness. . . . Farewell, my darling, and fortify yourself with the thought of my speedy return. God’s blessing rest upon you and the dear children. . . . I enclose an auricula and a pansy, which I gathered at Reinhardtsbrun. . . . I have got toys for the children, and porcelain views for you. . . .’ Two days after, he sent some Easter eggs made of sugar.

He found Coburg marvellously grown in beauty. The valleys about the town were already awake with new leaves and flowers. ‘Oh! how lovely and friendly is this dear old country,’ he wrote; ‘how glad I should be to have my little wife beside me,²⁰⁴ that I might share my pleasure with her!’ He went to Rosenau and picked some spring flowers from the garden for the Queen. Five days afterwards he was at Windsor again. In his diary, which usually contained no adjectives or superlatives, he wrote: ‘*Great joy.*’

§ II — 1844

THIS WAS the year of Emperors and Kings and Princes.

They came from Russia, France, Saxony and Prussia, to do homage to Victoria, but also to satisfy their appetite for politics and to learn whatever lessons England could teach them.

England was a greater power now and all Europe was fired by her example of constitutional monarchy. The Coburgs had spread their carpet right over Europe. '... This globe will soon be too small for you,' King Leopold had written to the Queen, three years before, 'and something must be done to get at the other planets. . . .' He was much amused by a rich and influential American from New York, who wished that some branch of the Coburg family might be able to provide a monarch for his country.²⁰⁵

In June, the Emperor Nicholas of Russia arrived unexpectedly in London. The visit was involved with a maze of politics. The Emperor's ambitions, and the vacillating relationship with France, have all passed into limbo now, and they have their full record in the histories of the times.

This simple Russian won English hearts. 'I know that I am taken for an actor; but indeed I am not,'²⁰⁶ he pleaded. He had been to England once before, as a boy, and had surprised the Court by eschewing the comfort of a bed and sleeping upon a sack of straw.²⁰⁷ He had also kissed Countess Lieven's hand, which struck the English ladies as extremely odd. He had been thought 'devilish handsome' and now that he came to England again, as a man of richer years and power, he fulfilled his early promise. He said he would spit upon the Frenchman's opinion of him, but he loved the English. He was lavish with his compliments and Albert especially engaged his affection. 'He told Lord Aberdeen he should like to have him for his own son.'²⁰⁸

A great review of troops was held in Windsor Park. The Emperor turned to the Prince and said that he hoped that some day they would meet on the field of battle 'on the same side.' The parade was prepared in the grand manner,

but there was a happy chink in Albert's armour of formality. He also had to march past at the head of his Regiment. He lowered his sword in full military form to the Queen, but 'with *such* a look and smile as he did it.' The sentence is from Lady Lyttelton's reminiscences. She added: 'I never saw so many pretty feelings expressed in a minute.'

The Queen's talent for entertaining gave the English Court a new kind of power among the Royalities of Europe. Just as the Russian Emperor and the King of Saxony went away enthralled, so did the King of the French delight in the fashion of his entertainment and reception, when he came to England in October.

Here, too, was a simple King, who ate only twice a day and required nothing but a hard bed and a large table for his papers. . . . 'He generally sleeps on a horse-hair mattress with a plank of wood under it. . . .' wrote King Leopold.

There was one pretty scene, a little withdrawn from the splendour. The King was to reply to the Address from the Corporation of London, and his speech had been carefully prepared for him. Almost at the last moment, he glanced at it and found that it had been translated into bad English. '*C'est déplorable,*' exclaimed the King, '*c'est pitoyable.*' So the King and the Queen and Prince Albert sat down and, between them, they wrote a new reply for the City of London.

Again the Queen's fullest pleasure lay in the adulation heaped upon the Prince. She wrote to her uncle: 'The King praised my dearest Albert most highly and fully appreciates his great qualities and talents—and what gratifies me *so much*, treats him completely as his equal, calling him "*Mon Frère*" and saying to me that *my husband* was the same as me, which it is—and "*Le Prince Albert, c'est pour moi le Roi*".'

The King went back to France. It is curious that Prince Albert did not fly into ecstasies over the visit in any of his letters. Nor did he see any golden opportunities for friendship with the French.²⁰⁹

§ III — 1844-46

PERHAPS PRINCE Albert suspected Louis Philippe's attempts at friendship from the beginning. None of his letters shows any enthusiasm for the King. Any doubt as to the relationship between Louis Philippe and the Prince was cleared away when the French King exposed his true character in the affair of the Spanish marriages which caused so much anxiety between the years of 1840 and 1846.

While Louis Philippe was courting the friendship of the Queen and Prince Albert, he was also ambitious for power in Spain. The Queen of Spain and her sister were young and unmarried and Louis Philippe and his Minister, Guizot, set their hearts on marrying the Duc de Montpensier²¹⁰ to the Queen, or failing this, to her sister. There were two Bourbon Princes of the Spanish branch who were also eligible. One of these, Don Francesco de Assis, was a miserable fellow, so ill-favoured by nature that he was called Paquita (Fanny) by his family. It was certain that he had neither the wish nor the capacity to become a father. There was a fourth candidate—Leopold, a brother of the Consort of the Queen of Portugal—another Coburg.

Dynastic ambitions spurred on Louis Philippe and Guizot to bring about a marriage which would unite the two countries, but the newly formed English friendship stood in their way. By such a strong alliance with another country, the French might increase their power, but they would also alienate English affections. For England there were obvious dangers if a French Prince shared the Spanish throne.

The Queen, Prince Albert, Louis Philippe, Guizot and Lord Aberdeen met at Eu and agreed that for the sake of their friendship, the Duc de Montpensier should not marry the Spanish Princess until the Queen herself was married to one of the Spanish Bourbon Princes and had children to

establish the succession. This meant that even if the Duc de Montpensier did marry the Spanish Princess, there would be no fear of his children coming too near to the Spanish throne. By making this concession, the French King induced Prince Albert and the Queen to promise that they would do nothing to urge the cause of Prince Leopold, nor discourage the suit of the Bourbon Princes.

Suddenly, in 1846, Europe was astounded by the announcement of the double engagement, of the Queen to the Bourbon Prince, Don Francesco de Assis, and her sister to the Duc de Montpensier. Thus Louis Philippe and Guizot had treacherously and stupidly broken faith with Queen Victoria. They had chosen the unfortunate Don Francesco for the Queen, knowing that her virtue would be safe in his frail hands: that there could be no children by the marriage. Thus all power would pass to the Duc de Montpensier and his descendants.

Although later history shows that this political dishonesty destroyed Louis Philippe as well as the Spanish royalties, it did not prevent a storm at the time. *Punch* represented Louis Philippe as Fagin, teaching his boys to pick pockets.

Albert wrote many letters to his brother during the years when the Spanish marriages were contemplated. In October of 1845, he talked of the deadly fear in Paris because his cousin Leopold was going near the Spanish frontier. 'We never moved a finger in this affair and we shall never do so,' he wrote. He had already said to Lord Aberdeen that he had no wish to press the suit of his cousin, 'if he should not be asked for by Spain herself, or to sacrifice him should he have no inclination to undertake so troublesome a task.'²¹¹ He thought the French attitude absurd and in a letter to Ernst, he wrote of the promise given to France that 'providing the King kept his word and did not try to promote one of his sons,' both the Queen and the

Prince Consort would use all their influence 'in bringing about a Bourbon marriage. . . . But we declared at the same time that we would not allow France to dictate the marriage of Queen Isabella and that we should insist that Spain should have the right to see to her own affairs, and that if a Bourbon marriage should not be accepted in Spain, in spite of all our endeavours to bring it about, any other marriage which would be agreeable in Spain, would also be agreeable to us. . . . We find ourselves forced to wash our hands of the affair and to explain to France that we have no part in it whatever.'²¹²

Louis Philippe was eternally afraid that the Queen and the Prince would not keep their promise and that they would urge the suit of the young Coburg.

In August of 1846, Lord Aberdeen went out of power and Palmerston came in, as English Foreign Minister. Guizot said of Palmerston: 'Here is a man who has the reputation of being quarrelsome. If we have any quarrel with him, everyone will believe that it is his fault and not ours.' Palmerston wrote a despatch, mentioning the Coburg Prince's name. He did not urge the marriage with the young Leopold, but Guizot professed to see in Palmerston's despatch sufficient reason for imagining that England was not keeping its promise. Palmerston had played further into Guizot's hands by speaking strongly about the Government of Spain and the need for reform. In doing this, he gave moral support to the progressive party, which was the terror of the Queen Mother of Spain [Christina] and her advisers. Up to this time, she had expressed no antagonism to the idea of the marriage with Leopold, but now, seeing many dangers in Palmerston's attitude, she threw herself entirely into the hands of the French, so that Louis Philippe was able to announce the engagement of the young Queen and her sister to a Bourbon Prince and his own son.

'Nothing can be more shameful and treacherous than the

politics adopted by the French Court,' Albert wrote to his brother, when the engagements were announced. 'We have been shamefully betrayed and now the other party triumphs. A miserable triumph, to have betrayed a friend. . . .'²¹³

In the same letter, he said that both the Queen Mother and the Queen of Spain had been in favour of Leopold's suit, to the last moment. When the French intrigue was complete, they 'made use of the ill humour of the ladies to bring forward Don Francesco, an impotent and half a fool, and have made arrangements with Montpensier for the Infanta. King L. Ph. had given us his word of honour never to think of this second marriage until the Queen was married and had children *et cela ne sera plus une affaire politique*. Now he declares he is no more bound to his word, because Leopold was proposed as a candidate, which Aberdeen promised should never be the case. The *bonne entente* has breathed her last. We are annoyed in the highest degree and in Spain the people are in full riot. We must hope the proverb: "Honesty is the best policy," will prove to be true.'

Seven months afterwards, Albert wrote again to Ernst of the marriage in Spain which had turned out as was to be expected. The couple were separated and, wrote Albert: 'The King follows the inspirations of a miraculous nun who is paid from Paris, the Queen has her lovers and at present, she is kept a prisoner in the castle by the King. Her mother, Christina, wanted to press a lover on her, one according to her choice, but the King's father, old Don Francesco, succeeded in getting one of his own party accepted. What will Louis Philippe have to answer for in heaven!'²¹⁴

§ IV

A FEW days after Louis Philippe had returned to France, the Queen and the Prince went into the city to open the Royal Exchange. They were both received with unstinted cheers.

The Queen wrote a note to her uncle: 'They say no Sovereign was ever more loved than I am . . . and *this* because of our happy domestic home, and the good example it presents.'²¹⁵

There was a spontaneity about the greeting which convinced even Prince Albert, who was not prone to misconstrue the feeling the English people had for him. After this appearance in the city, he wrote to Stockmar: 'Here, after four years, is the recognition of the position we took up from the first. You always said that if Monarchy was to rise in popularity, it could only be by the Sovereign leading an exemplary life, and keeping quite aloof from and above party.'

He had infused those principles into the character of the Queen and he had made them the inviolate idea of the Court. Slowly the mass of the English people were discarding their prejudices and admitting that there was virtue in the young German Prince after all.

§ v — 1844

IT WAS certain at this time, that Duke Ernst would not have any children. It is neither pleasant nor necessary to probe into the misfortunes of Albert's brother, whose service as Duke was much more splendid than his character as a husband. He engaged the affections of his people and his name is fair in Coburg to this day.

Ernst antagonised his advisers but Albert's loyalty was for ever strengthening him, and much of the older brother's success in Government was due to the endless sustenance his brother provided for him in his letters. 'The worm which is gnawing at your heart,' wrote Albert, in May of 1845, 'is mistrust. Those who really love you must have the sincere wish to lift this veil from your soul. It presses itself between you and those who are dearest to you.'

With the certainty that Ernst would not provide an heir for the Coburg Crown, there came the new duty and privilege to Albert of training one of his own sons to go back to the valley whence he came, to rule his German kinsmen. This son, Alfred, was born on August 6th, 1844. Again came the announcement of a birth at Windsor. 'These lines are to announce the birth of a second son which heaven has graciously given us . . . the child is unusually large and strong. . . . I cannot write much as I have to trumpet this news to all parts of the world.'

Two weeks afterwards he wrote to Ernst: ' . . . The little one shall, from his youth, be taught to love the dear small country to which he belongs, in every respect, as does his Papa. I am sending a letter to Alexandrina asking her to be Godmother.' He ended his next letter with: ' . . . Our politicians are brewing. About Christmas, we shall know what the beverage shall be.'

•

Chapter Eighteen

§ I — 1845

AFTER A CHRISTMAS which was 'totally German and gemütlich,'²¹⁶ the Court moved to London. Parliament opened, Peel came again to Buckingham Palace, day after day, and Albert, delighted with his friend, wrote of him to Stockmar as a sagacious, honourable Statesman.²¹⁷ The Queen also accepted him without demur. Indeed, she asked to be made Godmother to his granddaughter, she offered him the Garter, which he gently refused, and, watching his brave struggle in the storms at Westminster, she wrote: 'In these days, a minister *does* require some encouragement for the abuse and difficulties he has to contend with are dreadful.'²¹⁸

Still Albert remained almost unnoticed, beyond the circle of the Court. Those who were near to him wished that some of the limelight should fall also upon him. The Queen had written in her Journal: 'He ought to be, and is above me in everything really, and therefore I wish that he should be equal in rank to me.' She wished him to be made King Consort. Her private pleasure and plans were not long her own. They travelled as far as Fleet Street and the *Morning Chronicle* was unfriendly enough to presume that the conferring of such a title would be 'preliminary to a demand for an increased grant.'²¹⁹

Albert was not disturbed by the lack of either the grant or the title. In none of his letters, even those written to Stockmar or to his brother, did he show any wish for the honour. 'Peel regards my present position as extremely good,' he wrote and the suggestion of his elevated title was allowed to pass, without complaint or regret on his part.

§ II — 1845

THIS AGE, in which cleverness is considered a greater virtue

than character, smiles in a superior fashion at the sentimentalities of the Victorians. The quiet ceremonies of their drawing-rooms, the delicate reverence for anniversaries and the pretty social hypocrisies, which had but little evil in them, are all obliged to wither under the scorching materialism of the new century.

This despised Victorian sheen spread over the face of the kingdom during Prince Albert's life-time. It was the age of Nottingham lace curtains, tied back with sky-blue ribbons: the age of baubles beneath glass shades, filagree, and palms. Ladies of lesser taste were soon to place majolica jardinières upon staircases and hang lambrequins upon their mantel-pieces, with brass nails. While the industrial life of the country went through revolutions, towards new prosperity; while politics became less corrupt and morality became an ideal among those people who had formerly despised it, there was born also the tangled, picturesque, and delicate thing we have come to call 'Victorian taste.' Every article of furniture, every gewgaw of decoration and every framed object created in the century has been allowed, indiscriminately, to come under this name. But those who remember the homes of well-bred Victorian people will recall a delicacy and prettiness of invention which was not quite so terrible as this critical age imagines.

It is true that Albert did not improve every room which he embellished. But he cannot be blamed for every wax flower which blossomed in Victorian England. Nobody has forgiven him for putting silk tartans upon the French gilt chairs of Balmoral. But, in damning him upon this evidence, his accusers never take into account that he was the first man in the land to appreciate and to buy primitives and that he was responsible for the purchase of many of the pictures in the collections in Buckingham Palace and the National Gallery.

Although Prince Albert spent his childhood in castles

decorated with flamboyant rococco, he possessed a natural taste which survived the tide of dreadful French furniture, gilt and marble, which had flowed into the small Courts of Germany. His instinct was not always in subjection to his environment, and although he designed the gilt and tartan of Balmoral, and the platoons of marble busts at Windsor, it seems that his knowledge of art remained distinct from the fashions which he sometimes encouraged.

The Albert Memorial cries aloud in Kensington and the world has adopted the idea that here is his own taste, immortalised and terrible. But neither the Memorial, nor Balmoral, nor the Victorian sofas which now blush, forgotten, in attics, are fair examples of his taste. The noble pictures in Buckingham Palace must be remembered. It must be recalled that he was the most zealous pleader for the precious frescoes in the Chapel at Eton. When the frescoes were discovered, Albert begged the authorities not to cover them up with the tall oak stalls. He was overruled, and it was not until Dr. Montague James went to Eton that the frescoes were revealed again, as Albert wished they should be. The deriders of Kensington Gore must also remember that when the Chapel was built at Wellington, Albert deplored the architecture of his day and urged that Eton Chapel should be copied, for he preferred a replica of a beautiful thing to a contemporary monstrosity.

One writer has offered as proof of Albert's poor taste that he removed the Gainsboroughs from a drawing-room at Windsor, and hung Winterhalters in their place.²²⁰ But if he had gone further into the story, he would have found that it was the fashion in every country house to make room for the contemporary portraits of the family and move those of the older generations away, without consideration of their artistic value.

As a boy in Coburg, Albert had collected many beautiful things, including some fine early German wood carvings

which may still be seen in the *Feste* Coburg. He gathered together his blue and white Coburg china and the ruby glass goblets, making a brave show of his own choice amidst a welter of tawdriness. The same instinct urged him to buy primitives in England, without aid or advice, at a time when no other collector gave them a thought. When in his will he offered part of the collection to the National Gallery, his contemporaries were still so unappreciative that they rejected most of them and accepted only two or three, as a gesture in good manners.

The Crystal Palace and some of the astounding things which it held may be offered as further evidence of the Prince's taste. Here again, his adopted taste and not his knowledge made him fall in with the fashion and give his contemporaries what they wanted. In any case, the generation which criticises the Crystal Palace must first find excuses for its own sacrilege in Regent Street, its petrol pumps and its Wembley.

§ III — 1845

THE VAST chambers of Windsor and the Georgian rooms of Buckingham Palace were a suitable setting for the great occasions of the Queen's life. But Albert had reconciled Victoria to his ideas of domestic simplicity and when they were alone together, they talked of a small home of their own. The Queen wrote to Leopold of such a place, 'quiet and retired, and free from Woods and Forests and other charming departments, which really are the plague of one's life.'²²¹ So they bought the estate of Osborne, in the Isle of Wight. For them, it was a dream come true. The house was enlarged and here, 'in a very quiet and retired place,'²²² they had a retreat from the 'inquisitive and often impudent people.'²²³

The house was happily placed upon rising ground. Out-

side, Albert moved the earth to his own patterns; he made terraces and gardens, summer-houses and winding walks. Wherever there was a 'view,' he placed a seat so that he and Victoria might recline there in the evening. He was happy, 'away from all the bitterness people create for themselves in London.'²²⁴ The broad Solent was spread at the foot of the garden; the Prince thought it 'like Naples.' In later years, Victoria was able to look from her own estate and see her subjects bathing and running upon the opposite shore.

The Prince lived in an excitement of planning and planting. 'It is pleasant,' wrote Lady Lyttelton, 'to see how earnestly Prince Albert tries to do the best about this place, giving work to as many labourers as possible.' The bailiff had dismissed many men 'because it is harvest time, that they may work for others, telling them all, that the moment any man is out of employment, he is to come back here, and will, without fail, find work to do.'²²⁵ Here was delight. It did not seem to be true that Whitehall existed on the other side of the mists of Southampton Water, even when the red despatch boxes came, or when there were Ministers to take tea with them beneath the great cedar. There was security in this little estate of their own making.

Within the house, Albert and the Queen had played at a hundred new schemes of decoration. The drawing-rooms were supported on immense, pseudo-marble pillars, the long rooms were crowded with tables and the tables were crowded with porcelain views, souvenirs and miniatures of historical buildings, in wood, ivory or silver. Every bowl was gay with flowers, picked by the children in the woods. In the passages, there were recesses, lined with Garter blue and crowned with gilded plaster shells, each framing a German avuncular bust. There was something intimate and unroyal about Osborne. Here were no Georgian ghosts, as there were at Brighton, and the happy, healthy children might



Prince Albert driving his favorites.

wander through the woods at their will, without fear of meeting the spirits of their wicked uncles.

Near by were the ruins of Carisbrooke, where Charles Stuart had been a prisoner. There was also the grave of his infant daughter, who had died, 'consumed by a feverish distemper.' One of the graceful acts of Queen Victoria and the Prince when they came to live at Osborne, was to erect a monument in her memory, as 'a token of respect for her virtues and of sympathy for her misfortunes.' They wanted their new house and the country about it to be a place of peace.

Even the Ministers allowed their frowns to fade when they crossed Southampton Water and found their Queen and her Consort, planning their garden, like two children at play. Perhaps they felt a little ashamed of their anxieties and pesterings, when they opened their windows in the evening and saw the Queen and Albert, still wandering in the garden they had made, listening to the nightingales, standing hand in hand on the edge of the woods, Albert whistling to the birds 'in their own long, peculiar note, which they invariably answered.'²²⁶

About a mile away from the house, Albert made a Swiss chalet for the children and a miniature fortress, like the one he had made at Rosenau, as a child. He enlisted the help of his children and here, with charts and spades, he taught them the great secrets of war, as Uncle Leopold and Florschütz had taught Ernst and himself, twenty summers before.

§ IV — 1845

PRINCE ALBERT had been married for five and a half years, but the Queen had never seen the Thuringian valley, whence he came to England. He had told her stories of his childhood. Her mother, too, had painted the Coburg scene for her, so that while their children played and tumbled at their

feet, Albert and Victoria dreamed of the little Duchy, tucked away among the sweeping pine forests. Gay valentines came to them from their cousins. There were boxes of German biscuits and chairs made of Thuringian antlers. There were delicate drawings of the landscapes so dear to Albert's heart, so exciting to the Queen, since they were the frame from whence the Prince came to her.

While the great English machine possessed her, through all the first years of her marriage, she talked incessantly of the day when she would go with Albert to his home. The day came in August, 1845. The Court had been at Osborne. The children were happy, and Peel was able to reassure them about the state of the country. Ireland was almost peaceful, for the Catholics and Protestants were breathless from their struggle, and they had settled down to a momentary truce.

So the Prince and the Queen set out for Coburg by a tortuous and glorious road, for they were to see Uncle Leopold in Belgium and the King of Prussia before they crept into the valley, to be quiet and alone.

The party consisted of Lord Aberdeen, Lord Liverpool, Lady Canning and Lady Gainsborough. 'You need not fear that these people will make any pretensions,' Albert wrote to his brother. 'They have already travelled with us and last autumn they lived with us in a miserable, small house in Scotland. . . . The principal thing will be to keep the whole English colony together. . . . Do not separate us from them. . . . We do not expect any festivities. We only wish to have an opportunity of seeing the neighbourhood and the family.'²²⁷

' . . . If *Strangers* wish to come, don't encourage them to remain. They would only wish to watch us.'²²⁸ 'We are by no means expecting grand festivals. What I think would give Victoria a great deal of pleasure would be to see the children's procession at the Gregorius Festival.'²²⁹ . . . Victoria likes to dance, especially at small *thé dansants*. You

might arrange some. . . . Regarding the English way of keeping Sunday and the scruples belonging to it, I must mention that on Sundays we would not go to a ball or to the theatre, but there is no reason why we should not be happily assembled.' A few days before they sailed he wrote again: 'You need not arrange a chase, as Victoria does not like such pleasures and *I* prefer to stay with her. . . .'

They arrived at Antwerp on 'a pouring melancholy evening.'²⁸⁰ The Queen had never travelled very far before, so every scene which Albert showed her was a new delight. She saw the women in the Antwerp streets, 'in their hats and caps and cloaks, with their jugs of brass, going to market.' She noted every new sight in her diary. She was like a child again, her face pressed against the carriage window, while Prince Albert explained this or that to her. There was something faintly sad about the way she accepted his guidance; there was no effort to question his dominion now. He seemed to know almost everything.

Everywhere Victoria went she was acclaimed and honoured. Soldiers of new countries clicked their heels and saluted her. 'God Save the Queen' was sung to her in new tongues. Princes who barely spoke her language lifted their glasses and toasted her. In Cologne, the streets were sprinkled with *eau de Cologne*, so that her journey should be fragrant. In Bonn, the stiff-backed professors who had known Albert as a boy, came to smile upon him and say how delighted they were with his progress and his great position. No longer was there any jealousy or fear of rivalry in the Queen. She gave Albert his glory; she smiled happily when the cheering was especially loud for him.

In Bonn, Albert took Victoria to the little house where he had lived as a student. For a moment, they escaped from the bands and the trumpets and the sparkling glasses of wine. They were alone in the house where, in his teens, he had worked and dreamed. The King of Prussia rose to toast the

Queen at Brühl²⁸¹ where the nobility of all the country had gathered to honour them. 'Victoria' was the toast. The King rang his glass against Albert's, the Queen's eyes brightened through her tears. She rose, bent towards the King, and kissed his cheek.

Uncle Leopold came to see her. If ever a labyrinth of intrigue and design was justified, it was in this spectacle of his niece and nephew, passing across Europe, in a whirl of compliments, songs and flags. They left the glory of great places. The Kings and the Princes withdrew from the procession and the cheering people were left on the other side of a forest. The Queen and Albert were alone, in Albert's own country.

Victoria 'began to feel greatly moved—agitated indeed in coming near the Coburg frontier.' Everything now was pretty and in miniature. The streets were crowded with girls, in white and green. The sun shone; showers of white blossoms fell about them. They bowed and they smiled. When the Burgomeister tried to speak his welcome, he was 'quite overcome.' Every eager hand in Coburg had made a wreath of flowers to throw to them. The Duchess of Kent, grown older, and with the quiet which age brings with it, was there to welcome them. There was no enmity in the world. The Rosenau had been prepared for them and there they went, driving out from the town, to the summer landscape which had not changed since Albert was born there twenty-six years before.

The Rosenau was just as it always was in summer, as it is to this day, with its harvesters in blue blouses, its pots of petunias, the chicory flowers shining among the grass, the forest, with the high, pointed pines, piercing the blue sky.

'... my Albert's birthplace,' the Queen wrote in her diary, 'the place he most loves.' He 'was so, so happy to be there,' with her. It was 'like a beautiful dream.'

They celebrated Albert's birthday at Rosenau. The castle

was tiny. The Queen could look out of the miniature windows or, stepping from one little room to another, see the grotesque, painted walls, with their scenes of Swiss waterfalls, framed in convolvulus vines. There were bright blue ceilings, sprinkled with silver stars. In the wallpaper of one room, she could still see the holes Albert had made, when he learned fencing. She could rest her hands on the table upon which Albert had been lifted, to be dressed, when he was a baby. Nothing could disturb their peace now.

On the morning of his birthday, they went to the room where he was born. Outside, the choir from the town had come to serenade them. Albert talked to her of his mother—they looked out of the window and saw the distant castle whither Luther had come to translate the psalms. It shone upon the hill, in a tide of pink and yellow light.

In the afternoon, when the Princes and the peasants had left their presents and had gone away, the Queen and Albert walked alone together, by the stream and the forest. The great farm wagons lumbered up the hill, their drivers wiping the sweat from their foreheads. The blackbirds flew down among the rich corn. The pine trees sheltered Victoria and Albert as they walked. They came to a pool which Albert had known as a child. He made a drinking cup for Victoria, with his hands, because the water was so cool.

A peasant woman came along the path, and when she saw them, she said: '*Guten Abend.*' The Queen answered her and gave her some money. '. . . she shook my hand for it,' wrote Victoria. 'I don't think she the least knew who I was.'

Chapter Nineteen

§ 1 — 1845

THE QUEEN and the Prince returned and found England in distress. The year had begun prosperously: new railways had opened up the countryside, stimulating trade and giving confidence to the people, but December came sadly. After months of peace, the Sikhs had invaded British India. They were defeated at Modkee and Ferozeshah. In New Zealand, the Maoris had made another faint protest against the soldiers of Wikitoria, the great white Queen.' Issues even more terrible than these disturbed the peace of England. Political wranglings and failing crops were more immediate and more dramatic concerns than these risings in the far away and half-known corners of the earth.

'In November, Prince Albert wrote to his brother: '... the potato crops have turned out very badly and will lead to the greatest political complications—it is impossible to argue with famished people.'²³² Less than a month afterwards, on December 5th, Sir Robert Peel wrote to the Queen assuring her that 'in the present state of affairs,' he could render more service to her and to the country 'in a private than in a public station.'²³³ He went to Osborne, to make his mournful report. Prince Albert made a memorandum setting down the sense of their conversation. Half the potatoes in Ireland were ruined by the rot. Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Denmark had suffered in the same way, but they had opened their harbours and bought corn. Peel had proposed the same thing for England, and, by opening the ports, a preparation for the abolition of the Corn Laws. His colleagues had voted against him, so he had resolved to lay down his office. Prince Albert wrote of Peel's arrival at Osborne: '... he was visibly much moved and said to me that it was one of the most painful moments of his life, to separate himself from

us. . . . After we had examined what possibilities were open for the Crown, the conclusion was come to that Lord John [Russell] was the only man who could be charged with forming a Cabinet.' After the Queen had agreed in favour of Lord John, Peel had said that he would support him and use all his influence with the House of Lords to prevent their impeding his progress.

Peel was greatly moved, not because of the loss of power, nor of office, but because, as Albert wrote, of 'the breaking up of those relations in which he stood to the Queen and me, and the loss of our society, which was for him a loss for which there was no equivalent. . . .' Albert added, including Lord Aberdeen in his regret: ' . . . On our side, the loss of two so estimable men, who possess our whole and perfect confidence in public as well as in private affairs, and have always proved themselves true friends, leaves a *great gap*.'²³⁴ Peel himself wrote of the occasion: 'I will not say more than that the generous support which I have uniformly received from Her Majesty and from the Prince, and all that passed on the occasion of the retirement, made an impression on my heart that can never be effaced.'²³⁵

§ II — 1845-46

ON DECEMBER 29th, Lord John Russell had to confess his inability to form a Government. He 'handed back with courtesy the poisoned chalice to Sir Robert.'²³⁶ Albert was happy. 'We are *Seelenfroh* (glad in soul) . . . that we have survived the ministerial crisis of fourteen days duration and are now standing exactly where we stood before—upon our feet, whereas during the crisis, we were very nearly standing on our heads.'²³⁷ Albert wrote to Stockmar also, saying that he believed that the crisis had 'been a source of real advantage to the Crown, by producing a widely spread feeling that amid all the general confusion and heat of party, at least

one person has remained calm and free from party spirit, this person being the Queen.' He did not add that she drew much of her calm from the qualities of his own character and advice.

Peel came back into office. But in June of 1846 he went to Osborne again, to tender his resignation. This time, wrote Prince Albert, he was 'evidently much relieved in quitting a post the labours and anxieties of which seem almost too much for anybody to bear.'²³⁸ For Albert, it meant the straining of a friendship. There had been a scene in April when Albert had read to Peel six sheets of notes of a conversation they had had a few days before. Peel had been visibly uneasy because he had spoken quite unreservedly and he had not expected the Prince to set the conversation down on paper. Albert's regard for his feelings was shown when he threw the memorandum into the fire,²³⁹ to Peel's relief.

So it was that Lord John Russell and Palmerston came near to the Queen again. It was a change regretted by both the Queen and the Prince. She looked upon Peel and Aberdeen as 'irreparable losses to us and the Country.' They were 'devoted friends,' Albert and the Queen felt 'so safe with them.' She added, in the letter to her uncle, that now she was obliged to deal with Lord John and Palmerston, the contrast was 'very striking; there is much less respect and much less high and pure feeling.'

§ III — 1846

THE AFFAIRS of the changing Parliaments have lost their importance now, at least as far as Prince Albert is concerned. One delves into the vast correspondence of 1845-46 to find that the Prince's character and talents developed under the enormous strain put upon him. He sought no credit for himself. The most certain proof of his increasing strength is in the Queen's letters. She was a great letter writer. Clear

thinking, restraint and easy use of language place her letters among the best written in her century. If one reads the Queen's letters at the same time as the Prince's, one sees that while her phrases were her own, the thought behind them was a collaboration. A hundred times in the correspondence of 1845-46, we see her judgments strengthened by this other power which was beside her all the time. There is no written statement which can be quoted to prove this, unless we accept the occasional ecstasies of the Queen in her letters to her uncle. 'Albert's use to me, and I may say to the *Country*, by his firmness and sagacity is beyond all belief in these moments of trial,' she wrote, when Lord John Russell and Palmerston took the places of Peel and Aberdeen as her Ministers.

Yet every move Albert made was criticised by some faction or other. While men like Peel and Aberdeen were almost passionate in their tributes to his excellence, others, beyond the horizon of his influence, censured almost everything he did. The attacks made upon Albert disturbed the Queen so much that she appealed to Uncle Leopold. But he told her that it was impossible to hope to escape censure and calumny. He suggested that Albert might modify or avoid whatever was considered by his enemies as a fit subject for attack.

The peers were still unable to understand Albert's cosmopolitan interests and his desire to spend his time with artists and thinking people. The Queen was almost pathetic in her concern, and in her desire for Albert's happiness, she grasped every little incident in which people were chivalrous to him, eager to believe that he was winning their affection. The Duke of Buckingham who was 'immensely proud,' had carried coffee to Albert, 'after dinner on a waiter . . . himself.' She was so delighted that she wrote of the evening to her uncle and added: 'Everywhere my dearest Angel receives the respect and honours I receive.' She was very

eager to believe what was still sadly untrue. On another occasion, when one of the children was struggling with a glove, the Prince took him on his knee and helped him. Lady Lyttelton happened to be standing near by and she said: 'It is not every Papa who would have the patience and kindness.' For this she got 'such a flashing look of gratitude from the Queen.'

Peel, self-made, with talents developed through experience, could see the one thing which was lacking in Albert's life. The Queen gave him love and domestic contentment, but he still wanted intellectual stimulus and understanding. He was a scholar and even when he approached politics, he considered their historical background and every possible detail of ancient knowledge which would help to solve the problems of the State. There were no wild enthusiasms or prejudices in his politics. He had hated the network of government when he was a boy. Now, with increased power, and the practice of government and not merely the theories, he became alive with new ideas and the energy to resolve them into action. But even his home life, his wife and his growing family and the affairs of government were not enough for him. Geology and art, building and mechanics—he was interested in everything. These interests demanded friendships different from those he could make in his own class. The English peers still had a vestige of Lord Chesterfield's prejudice:

'A man of fashion, who is seen piping or fiddling at a concert, degrades his own dignity. If you love music, pay fiddlers to play for you, but never play yourself. It makes a gentleman appear frivolous and contemptible.'

When Prince Albert entertained artists and scientists, talking with them and enjoying their company, he drew 'censure and calumny' down upon him. The Queen's appeal

brought further advice from Leopold. 'The dealings with artists, for instance, require great prudence,' he wrote. 'They are acquainted with all classes of society, and for that very reason dangerous. . . .'²⁴⁰

§ IV — 1846

WHEN THE Prince went among the middle-class people, sharing their interests, talking to them of schools and docks and architecture and warehouses, he seems to have pleased almost everybody he met. He went to Liverpool in July of 1846 and, standing beside the Mayor, he was assured that the people around him appreciated the zeal he was showing 'in promoting the best interests of mankind.' His solidity appealed to them and neither his culture nor his manners were beyond their understanding. With Mayors and Councillors he could talk of welfare and progress—religion, science and philanthropy. 'I have done wonders of activity,' he wrote to the Queen, sending her a flower and a programme of the procession. But the Queen hated these days of separation. 'I feel very lonely without my dear Master,' she wrote to Stockmar. '. . . without him everything loses its interest . . . it will always be a terrible pain for me to separate from him, even for two days; and I pray God never to let me survive him.' She showed a curious and selfish adoration in this last sentence.

Eight years had passed since Albert came to England, and it was an occasion upon which Stockmar might come to see him and write one of his serious reports. He thought Albert had made 'great strides.' He wrote: 'Place weighty reasons before him and at once he takes a rational and just view. . . . He has also gained much in self-reliance. His natural vivacity leads him at times to jump too rapidly to a conclusion and on occasion he acts too hastily, but he has grown too clear-sighted to commit any great mistake. He will now and then

run against a post and bruise his shins.' Then he added, a little sententiously: 'But a man cannot become an experienced soldier without having been in battle and getting a few blows. . . . His mind becomes every day more active, and he devotes the greater part of his time to business, without a murmur.'²⁴¹

'The Queen also improves greatly. She makes daily advances in discernment and experience; the candour, the love of truth, the fairness, the considerateness with which she judges men and things, are truly delightful, and the ingenuous self-knowledge with which she speaks about herself is simply charming.'²⁴²

When the year ended, Albert wrote to his brother: ' . . . I am beginning to look at the accumulating years with mixed feelings. May the year 1847 bring us together again, so that we may enjoy a happy meeting. Our present consists of two pictures of us which are real pendants, not too large, painted by Winterhalter. So we hope you will like them. Victoria leads Bertie by the hand. I behave most decently, in black evening dress, and "elegantly wrapped in a cloak".'²⁴³

Chapter Twenty

§ 1 — 1847

AMONG THOSE who satirised Prince Albert when he came to England, was a vindictive poet who wrote impertinently about 'Saxe-Coburg's pauper Prince.' He had played with the rumour that Albert was a Roman Catholic.

'The youngster's faith is made of easy stuff,
Ready to turn and pliable enough;
No bigot he, to one or t'other creed—
Saxe-Coburg owns no martyrs in her breed.'

The verse was no doubt inspired by King Leopold's willing conversion from his Lutheran faith, when he became the Catholic King of Belgium. The prosperous Coburgs had given Belgium a King, England a Queen and her husband and Portugal a Prince Consort. In later years they were to give Bulgaria a King and Leopold's daughter was to cross the Atlantic, to be Empress of Mexico. In other countries too, they won influence and reputation.

The character which made it possible for Leopold to change from the creed of Luther to that of Rome appeared in almost every Coburg, in one form or another. They were able to adapt themselves to the country of their adoption. It is curious also to see that when the country was one of poor character and revolutionary habits, the Coburg Prince himself, chameleon-like, seemed to change his colour and his character, to suit his environment. In the countries which escaped the feverish revolutions and discontents of the forties of the last century—England and Belgium—the two Coburg Princes were equally adaptable to the life and interests of the people about them, just as their less fortunate relatives adopted the untidy ethics of Bulgaria and Portugal. Leopold may not have brought any

extravagant ideas of martyrdom with him from Coburg, but neither did he bring away any dramatic schemes of tyranny.

It might almost be said that the idea of European constitutional monarchy and liberal government was born in Coburg. In the late forties, while France, Prussia, Italy, Portugal and Spain were torn and devastated by revolt, England and Belgium remained comparatively calm. Both countries became the haven of abdicated Kings and rejected statesmen. Leopold had long ago foreseen that the old kind of monarchy was doomed and that the mass of people was educated to a point where they would demand a voice in their own government. Foreseeing this, he had ruled the Belgians for their own good and not for his own enrichment.

These ideas of liberal government were the essence of his education of the Queen and Prince Albert. Leopold and Albert sought to achieve, through constitutional monarchy and liberal government, what the misguided politicians of other countries thought could be won only through bloodshed and revolution. They tried to reconcile the Crown to the enlightened people, through the liberality of their own government, rather than wait for the people to emancipate themselves through violence.

The satirist who accused Albert of not having martyr's blood in his veins, might also have added that he had nothing of the tyrant in his make-up. He was one of the first statesmen of his century to work for the welfare of the people, without regard for their wealth, their birth or their influence. As a farmer and a landlord, as a father and a husband, he showed England that he was no idle aristocrat or landowner. During the time when Europe was distraught and Ireland was in the terrors of famine, he threw every idea and energy he had into the cause of what he described as 'that class of our community which has most of the toil and least of the enjoyments of this world.' He was forever

depressed by the lot of the British workman. 'I never have heard a real *shout* in England,' he complained.

In the European revolutions of 1846 and 1847, Albert did not seek to excuse the monarchs when he considered that they had acted unjustly towards their peoples. His feelings for Louis Philippe have already been made clear. His sympathies were with law and order; tyranny made him indignant, and when the Queen of Portugal antagonised those about her, he freely admitted that she made mistakes, 'which she is capable of doing every moment.' '... She will be lost,' he wrote to his brother.

Victoria and Albert were bringing the Crown closer and closer to the people, by the example of their life at home. Victoria may have been proud, and conscious of her Crown in dealing with Princes and Ministers and courtiers, but she was still true to the early picture of the child who trampled on the music master and who, the next moment, sent an umbrella out to an old man in the rain.

§ II — 1847

HOWEVER MUCH Prince Albert regretted Peel's retirement, he tried to encourage the new Ministers towards his non-party ideal. He wrote to Lord Palmerston on a certain matter and said that the Queen begged that he would never hesitate to send her 'such private communications,' however unreserved they might be in their language. He said it was their 'chief wish and aim' that by hearing all parties, they could 'arrive at a just, dispassionate and correct opinion upon the various political questions.'²⁴⁴

But the tone of the royal correspondence had changed. Several times during 1847 there were angry letters from the Queen to Palmerston and to Russell. She reprimanded Palmerston for sending drafts to Lisbon without submitting them to her first,²⁴⁵ and Lord John also came in for a

scolding for appointing a Physician in Ordinary without consulting her.

In the following year, the anger of the Court reached the point of open indignation. The Queen assured Lord John Russell that she was highly indignant at the way Palmerston conducted affairs as Foreign Minister, and in September she felt that she 'could hardly go on with him'²⁴⁶—she had no confidence in him—she thought his writings 'as bitter as gall' and was wholly displeased by his existence.

While Europe was changing before the tide of insurrection, England had to look anxiously towards the west as well, and be drawn into the tragedy of Ireland, then devastated by hunger, lawlessness and fear. 'In Ireland, we are daily expecting rebellion and civil war,'²⁴⁷ Albert wrote to Stockmar. In the Union of Skibereen alone, eleven thousand people had died of famine. '... It is safer in that Island to violate than to obey the law,' Lord Stanley had said in the House. The politicians wrestled with schemes to suppress the robbers and murderers, who were spreading new horrors in the wake of the famine. It was not until the New Parliament met in November that the Coercion Bill was introduced. This, with the widespread efforts to succour the impoverished country, brought some semblance of law and order to the distressed people.

The unhappy years passed by, with one tragedy following at the heels of the last. Albert had paused in his more immediate concerns to observe the King of Prussia, 'misled by similes which captivate his fancy.'²⁴⁸ He had deplored the King's confusion of ideas and, weighed down also by the distress in Ireland, he had declared that Belgium was the only pleasant spot in Europe.

§ III — 1847

THERE HAD been one personal conquest which allowed

Albert to contemplate his slowly growing popularity among people outside the company of statesmen and courtiers. In February, he was elected Chancellor of Cambridge University. He had to pit his popularity against that of Lord Powys. There were 1,790 votes, and of these, 953 were for the Prince. Sixteen of the twenty-four Professors voted for him and nineteen of the thirty Senior Wranglers.

He wrote his stepmother a long letter from Osborne, whither he had gone 'in hopes to inhale the spring by the sea-shore under blossoming myrtles, laurels, and magnolias.' But he found nothing but 'frost and parching east wind.' He added, as an incidental footnote: 'Meanwhile I have become Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, which has elected me after a violent party struggle, in which, however, I took no part whatever.'

Wordsworth was to write an ode of celebration for him. The old poet promised to 'retouch a harp' which had 'for some time been laid aside.' The harp was a little tired now, but there was still a vestige of the old beauty in his lines, written for this descendant of a Coburg Prince 'Who threw the Saxon shield o'er Luther's life.'

The Queen went with Albert to Cambridge for the proud occasion. She was delighted. The sky was 'very blue, the sun very, very hot.' Albert had to advance towards her 'in his beautiful dress of black and gold,' and then he had to read his address. Madame Bunsen, who was with them, described the pretty scene, the 'admirable command of countenance of both,' and how the Queen 'only smiled upon the Prince at the close, when all was over.'

They stayed for three days. Once, after the ceremonies of the day, the evening was so beautiful that they walked together, at ten o'clock, 'in curious costumes.' 'Albert in his dress coat, with a mackintosh over it; I, in my evening dress and diadem, and with a veil over my head. . . . All was so pretty and picturesque . . . nothing seemed wanting, but

some singing, which everywhere but here in this country we should have heard. A lattice opened, and we could fancy a lady appearing, and listening to a serenade.²⁴⁹

§ IV — 1848

THE GLORY of being Chancellor was not enough for Albert. When he returned to Windsor he asked for every possible shred of information about the University studies and decided that classics and mathematics were pursued out of all proportion. To make any criticism of an aged University, called for courage as well as wisdom. Albert lacked neither, but he trod delicately among the corns of the Dons.

He had the support of Sir Robert Peel in his schemes to broaden the field of Cambridge studies. The Vice-Chancellor had actually urged that a century should pass before new discoveries in science should be admitted into University instruction. Such conservative methods stirred the Prince and Peel to indignation, but they worked cautiously, knowing the 'dread of innovation' among the Professors.

Albert invited the Vice-Chancellor to Windsor. He explored and planned. He found that metaphysics, psychology, political economy, oriental languages, modern languages, geography, chemistry and astronomy were quite excluded. The Vice-Chancellor admitted the mistakes but he demurred faintly because it was so difficult to convince the heads of colleges that there was virtue in any innovation. Albert worked with exquisite caution. He knew that his own intervention would arouse the Dons to furious defence of their ancient methods. So again, as he had often done, he prepared the cannon balls for another man to fire. He sought results, but no credit for himself. So the Vice-Chancellor left Windsor and went back to the Cam, full of Albert's new ideas.

The Prince offered prizes and suggested subjects for the

English prize poem. He had a thousand things to do, but each was completed, to the last detail. A plan of reform was drawn up, with broader fields of study, more liberal opportunities for honour—it was described as a scheme ‘broad enough to satisfy the demands of all moderate reformers.’ The scheme was adopted by a ‘triumphant majority’ and the Vice-Chancellor vowed that Albert’s election had brought in ‘a new and glorious era in . . . academic history.’²⁸⁰

Prince Albert had begun the reforms and he had given the greater energy and impetus which carried them through. Many prejudices against him faded away after this success. *The Times*, which had never opened its arms fully to him, spoke of the nation’s ‘debt of gratitude’ to him, since he was the ‘first to suggest, and the most determined to carry out’ the changes.

The Examiner greeted the ‘student of Saxe-Gotha’ who had ‘weighed Cambridge in the balance’ and found it to be ‘a sham.’ They congratulated ‘the country on its Prince and the University on its Chancellor.’ Even *Punch* withheld the bitterness with which it had greeted all the Prince’s efforts, since he came to the country. Leech took up his pencil and drew Albert ‘taking the Pons Asinorum, after the manner of Napoleon taking the Bridge of Arcola.’

§ V — 1847

THE COURT went to Scotland in August. When Prince Albert visited the west coast, a reporter thought he ‘looked pleased with everything, and everybody, and with himself too.’ Albert quoted the sentence in a letter to the Duchess of Kent, and added: ‘I must also confess that the reporter was right . . . is not that a happy state? . . . Yesterday, my twenty-eighth birthday, we had a Highland gathering at which there were all sorts of ancient games of a warlike kind.’

Within a few days, he was deep in German politics again.

'My own view,' he wrote, 'is that the political reformation of Germany lies entirely in the hands of Prussia, and that Prussia has only to will, in order to accomplish these results.' This still very young man had the temerity to write to the King and urge him to realise that the day was past when monarchs might make treaties without consulting the wishes of their people. But the King of Prussia was deaf to Albert's liberal opinions.

When Albert was not pondering over the state of Europe, he set down his opinion of English politicians. He thought Lord Grey 'positive in his views, fond of discussion,' but 'open to argument, and, if worsted . . . ready to own it at once, and to adopt the argument by which he was overthrown.' Of Lord Palmerston he said that he 'acts less upon principle; still obstinate although he is, he always gives in when driven into a corner by argument.' He added: 'The political horizon grows darker and darker. Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal are in a state of ferment.' Thus was his holiday clouded. But there were drives in the pony carriage, through the wild, beautiful country. This summer, the Queen and the Prince stayed in a shooting lodge, at Ardverikie, 'with many nice rooms in it.' Stags' horns were placed around the outside and in the passages, and the walls of the drawing-room were 'ornamented with beautiful drawings of stags, by Landseer.'²⁶¹ They had not yet bought Balmoral. Even here in the Highlands, Albert could not escape Stockmar's little lectures. 'Let your unceasing study, your unceasing occupation, be human nature in all its length and breadth, and consider politics only as the means of doing service, as far as in you lies, to the whole human race.'²⁶²

Albert enjoyed his escape in Scotland, and the Queen, sharing his pleasure, wrote: 'Really, when one thinks of the very dull life, and particularly the life of self-denial, which Albert leads, he deserves every amusement. And even about his amusements he is so accommodating, that I am deeply

touched by it. He is very fond of shooting, but it is all with the greatest moderation.'

§ VI — 1846-48

ABOUT A mile from Windsor Castle, set in a wooded part of the park, was Frogmore, a modest Georgian house, about which there was a charm and quiet beauty which seemed to protect it from all changes and ugly intrusions. It was to Frogmore that the Duchess of Kent had retired, living there for many months of the year, near enough to her daughter and her nephew to be able to lunch with them and walk with them and join in their family life.

The Castle was vast and grand, but this house was planned on modest lines. Its colonnade looked out upon a small lake, banks of daffodils, and fearless water-fowl, peering from among the bulrushes. In the winter time, when the scene was white and still, Albert would skate there, the Queen and her mother walking upon the island, watching the slim, graceful figure gliding so picturesquely before them, the snowflakes shaken from the trees caught in his hair. The Duchess was no longer distressed and anxious. There was no Georgian ogre in the Castle against whom she must plot and defend herself from rudeness. With her daughter, too, there was no longer any harshness or misunderstanding to mar the even tenor of their love.

Lady Augusta Bruce²⁵³ was among the ladies who lived with the Duchess at Frogmore, and she wrote many letters describing the scenes of her life. 'Do you smell the roses and the honeysuckle in my glass . . . do you see the swans on the lake and the birds hopping about on the short grass under the big oak trees?'

Sometimes the Queen would come down from the Castle '*quite alone*.' 'Her kindness, her anxiety, the tenderness, are too dear.' But it was Prince Albert who captured the hearts

of this little, lesser Court, tucked away among the trees. He was shy—but they loved his ‘good sense and *feeling*.’ ‘The *blessing* he is to the Queen and country,’ wrote Lady Augusta, who was never wild or unbalanced in her enthusiasms. She commented on ‘. . . the good he does, his kindness, his well-conditioned mind and tastes, and his anxious desire to do what is right and encourage and develop in others all that is good.’

Prince Albert was fond of his aunt: he was bound to her through their common love for the German valley, whence they came to England. They would walk through the park together, pausing by the hollow where Falstaff slept, or walking along the river bank towards Datchet, recalling the people and the stories of Coburg and its forest.

The Duchess had gathered a company of ladies about her, one of them German, the others English. The life of this little Court seemed to be barely in touch with the world. They wrote fragrant letters and they learned to play new songs upon the piano. Sometimes there was a fashionable duet, just arrived from Paris. They sat in the Flower Room, with the sun streaming in upon them, exchanging gentle gossip or watching the children playing upon the lawn. The ageing Duchess delighted in *curiosities*; she played with her grandchildren; she watched them feeding the fowls or gathering gooseberries, and, sometimes, refreshing the harmless vanities of her youth, she would ask questions about the fashions in France, wishing to know ‘if people wear great magnificence of gowns . . . if they wear ribbons or feathers . . .’ or she would order ‘a nice bonbonnière for her to carry her peppermint drops in,’ made of tortoiseshell, from ‘one of the smart bonbon makers’ in Paris.

One day, one of her ladies appeared at the table with a blue ribbon. The Duchess turned to a gentleman of her Court and asked him did he not admire it. He smiled, bowed gallantly and then declared that *everything* was becoming to

the lady in question. She was so discomfited that she made the servant take away her plate. In her embarrassment she could eat no more. Such were the pretty scenes of their life at Frogmore.

Almost every year the Duchess celebrated her birthday in the Highlands. She would be awakened, on a sunny day in August, by the National Anthem being played beneath her window. The whole household would gather upon the lawn, looking up at her bedroom, flowers in their buttonholes, music in their hands, and feathers in their caps. It was 'very pretty, all the maids with bouquets and all so neat and tidy.' Then the ladies and gentlemen would assemble in the dining-room to wait for the Duchess to come in, dressed in white. An ode would be read to her, and then the party would move to the drawing-room. The round table would be decorated with lovely wreaths and presents: bronze table ornaments and miniatures, embroidered stools, a hand-worked chair, to be discovered beneath a cover of silver paper, and a pen tray, supported by 'two most funny looking bears, on their hind legs.' There would be country dances in the evening and at the end, when the whisky toasts had been liberal, an exuberant servant would sing the National Anthem. One of the ladies would lean across and suggest that his singing was slightly 'supper-annuated.'

Sometimes, the Queen and the Prince would dine with the Duchess and after dinner they would sit upon a sofa, 'armed with a big Gaelic dictionary.' Then also there would be puns and jokes, and the Duchess would laugh and say that her ladies were very 'notty.' She would play upon the piano and sing, or she would sit at the table and play whist, until her ladies would look anxiously at her nodding head and see that she was almost asleep.

Chapter Twenty-one

§ 1 — 1848

IN COBURG, Ernst's married life was less peaceful than it had been in the beginning. His wife retired more and more into a life of her own. One may still go to her rooms in Ehrenburg Castle and see a minute closet, lined with books, she had made for herself. There are panels in the ceiling, with the names of Goethe and Schiller painted upon them. Here she was inclined to sit, shutting herself away from the distresses outside. Ernst had attempted to sell some of the family portraits in the Castle, and Albert had protested. 'It shows a want of feeling . . . and it must damage your reputation in your country and abroad. I cannot imagine how anybody could think of such a thing.' Sixteen days afterwards, Albert wrote to him again. 'The pictures are in my possession now. . . . The affair is settled.' 'I think it is better that you are a little angry with me, than that you should go on harming yourself without my doing anything to prevent it.'²⁵⁴

There were greater troubles than this in store for Ernst. In February, the Grand Duke of Baden had been forced to give his people liberal concessions, including trial by jury. Many other little Duchies were inspired by Baden's success: the cry for emancipation spread all over Germany. It went north and devastated Prussia. It went south and into the quiet of the Thuringian valley. Europe lost its head in the new experiment.

'All I hear from home is dreadful.' There were riots among the peasants in both Gotha and Coburg. 'Such an outbreak of the people is always something *very dreadful*, and what will be done now, will be done hurriedly and therefore badly.' Ernst had already set a liberal plan before the insurgents of Gotha, but still they were dissatisfied. Albert wrote: 'The claims themselves seem to contain nothing but what you have already proposed. The only difficult point is

the question about the domains. Would it not be best to divide them?'²⁵⁵

Albert was willing that the people of his country should have a voice in their own Government. He saw the advantages of constitutional rule in England and he believed that the Coburg-Gotha constitution should consist of two Chambers, one of the Princes and one of the people. He thought that the laws for election should be liberal and extended, but he was adamant where the rights of the army were discussed. Soldiers might *assist* lawful authority, but they must not be the executors of the law. *'In Germany and on the continent the mistake is made as a rule, of looking upon the military as executors of the law, but the army has, in reality, nothing to do with law, and it should be called in for help only when it is proved that law has been trespassed and that a state of anarchy has broken out. Only then it is the duty of the military power to step in and assist the lawful authority. . . .'*

'Everything looks rather black in Germany just now, but I don't give up hope. . . . The proofs of the people's attachment to the royal houses are not to be despised, and the desire for a united Germany is laudable.'

Two months afterwards, he wrote: '. . . Should the Sovereignty fall from Coburg altogether (God grant it may not be the case) I don't see why my *eldest* son should not have the right of succession. . . . I hear that Altenburg recommends that I and my children should be excluded from the succession in Coburg and Gotha. . . . It will be worth while to keep your eyes on this question.'²⁵⁶

But Ernst lost neither his land nor his power, although both were reduced, under the new spell which was being cast over Europe.

§ II — 1848

EARLY IN the new year, Madame Adelaide, sister and coun-

seller of Louis Philippe, died in Paris. The King's sorrow softened the anger of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and they wrote kindly letters to him. The Queen was afraid that people might misconstrue her sympathy and see some political purpose behind it, but she preferred this risk rather than that she 'should appear unfeeling and forgetful of former kindness and intimacy.' So the resentment over the Spanish marriages was softened. It was well, for in two months' time, Louis Philippe was to abdicate and seek refuge in England and the protection of the Queen.

In March the French King's power was destroyed for ever. His behaviour over the Spanish marriages had belittled his country's reputation and the French people were conscious of their humiliation. In their unrest they nursed all their complaints into one hatred; their King and their statesmen had indulged in corruption and bribery and they had let France down in the eyes of the world. The people rose in a tempest about their King and his Government, so that Louis Philippe and Guizot were forced to fly the country. Stockmar had written of the King's 'blind obstinacy' and of Guizot's 'vain and boundless self-sufficiency.' These qualities did not help them now.

Albert pleaded with Stockmar to come to him, during these terrible changes. If only Stockmar could be with him in the 'political observatory,' to talk about everything and help him to reconcile theories with action! In the meantime, Louis Philippe was making a humble and pathetic escape from his country. He had evaded capture by back doors, disguise and subterfuge. There was little honour in his going.

'The dregs of the populace are to be the rulers of France,' wrote Albert to Stockmar. 'They are armed, and in a fortnight will be without bread.'

The Queen and Albert were appalled by the French tragedy. They sympathised with their 'poor French relations,' and the Queen was moved by the horrible stories of

Princess Clémentine, who could not sleep, even when she was safe in England, because her nights were haunted by the 'horrible creatures' and 'those unkind, fiend-like faces.'²³⁷

The Queen and Albert were willing to do everything they could 'for the poor dear family,' but feelings and diplomacy were different matters. They knew also that it would be necessary to recognise the new Government. 'It will not be pleasant for us to do this, but the public good and the peace of Europe go before one's feelings.' And then the Queen added: 'God knows what *one feels* towards the French.'²³⁸

§ III — 1848

ALBERT'S SYMPATHIES and thoughts were suddenly taken away from the chaos of Europe by the death of his grandmother, the old Duchess of Gotha, who had loved him from the days of his childhood. Much of the womanly tenderness and love in his early life had come from her, and the affections of his childhood were still warm enough for this death to devastate him. The Queen wrote: 'My poor Albert . . . is so pale and sad, it breaks my heart.' Ernst was in England, so the two brothers were together in their grief. 'The dear good Grandmama!' Albert wrote to his stepmother. 'She was an angel upon earth, and to us ever so good and loving.'

The new year had come in darkly for all Europe. The new age, which called itself *democratic*, was not being born without terrible pain. 'My heart is heavy,' wrote Albert. 'I lose flesh and strength daily. . . . European war is at our door, France is ablaze in every corner. . . . I am not cast down, still I have need of friends,' he pleaded to Stockmar. ' . . . Come, as you love *me*. . . . '

Three weeks afterwards, Princess Louise was born. Albert 'was often full of misgivings because of the many moral shocks which have crowded upon Victoria of late. . . . If a

little boy had come, our children would be quite symmetrical, now there are four against two. Yet we must be thankful that all the grief Victoria had did not harm her health.'²³⁹ But the Queen's courage was tremendous. 'Great events make me calm. It is only trifles that irritate my nerves,' she wrote to her uncle. 'But *I feel* grown old and serious, and the future is very dark.'²⁴⁰

At last the Queen and Albert saw the French fugitives, 'humbled, poor people they looked.' Louis Philippe had gone to live at Claremont. In her concern for them, the Queen wrote to her old friend: 'Lord Melbourne's kind heart will grieve to think of the *real want* the poor King and Queen are in. Their dinner-table containing barely enough to eat. . . . Truly the poor old King is sufficiently punished for his faults.'

Prince Albert rose above his sorrow to grapple with the affairs of the world again. The new fever for freedom was spreading all over Germany. He regretted that the excitement made it 'impossible for the educated and thinking Germans to follow the French experiment with undivided attention. . . . It shows that when riotous people madly interfere with the wheelwork of the social machine, which is driven more by natural law and natural power, that the machine is destroyed and all natural power is let loose against society. The circle is becoming narrower and narrower and the catastrophe is coming on visibly. An outbreak in Germany is unfortunately to be expected, and the Almighty have mercy on the Germans if they are not unanimous.'²⁶¹

The fever reached England. A crowd rushed from Trafalgar Square to Buckingham Palace, shouting *Vive la République*, breaking the lamps as they went, and headed by a youth wearing epaulettes.²⁶² The guard was turned out, the youth was arrested and he began to cry. Leech turned the incident into a joke for *Punch*.

There were more serious riots in the Scottish and provincial cities, but they were suppressed. The English are not an experimental people—the changes in their national life must come by slow evolution and not by revolution. The French revolution of 1848 and the changes which were to come to Russia and Germany after the Great War had already come to England under Cromwell's hand, during the Commonwealth. Victoria ruled a kingdom which was at least one hundred years ahead of Europe, in Government and in public conduct.

On April 11th, Albert wrote again to his brother. 'Yesterday we had to stand our test.' Fifteen thousand people were going to meet on Kennington Common, with Fergus O'Connor to lead them. Albert continued his letter: 'The monster meeting did not take place. Three hundred thousand special constables had registered to maintain order. They all carried only a staff. The troops were hidden. Some gentleman had informed Mr. Fergus O'Connor that if anything dreadful were to happen, he would be shot. All had its effect.'

To Stockmar he wrote: 'We had our revolution yesterday, and it ended in smoke. London turned out some hundreds of special constables; the troops were kept out of sight, to prevent the possibility of a collision, and the law has remained triumphant. I hope this will react with advantage on the continent.' He added: 'Ireland still looks dangerous.'²⁶³

§ IV — 1848

THE EUROPEAN disasters spread farther south in March, when the Lombards revolted against Austrian rule in Milan. Twenty-two days afterwards the King of Sardinia determined to advance with his army into Milan, praying and fighting for Italian unity. The Venetians, the Tuscans and

the Romans threw their strength and fortune into the campaign, and the Pope was obliged to bow to the wishes of his people and declare war on Austria. Thus Austria was forced to fight for her Italian Provinces, while she was also threatened by insurrection.

Prince Albert set down many wise theories about these tumults in Europe. But the misery and disease in Ireland pleaded for something more tangible than theories. Young Ireland had urged the unhappy people to use molten lead and vitriol for their revenge, and to maim the horses of the rich by spreading broken glass upon the streets. Famine had killed reason among the Irish people and their defiance of the law was terrible. The man who had no gun to use against England was bidden to sell his garment to buy one.²⁶⁴

In England too, the Chartists had been refreshed for new riots. 'The organisation of these people is incredible,' Albert wrote to Stockmar. 'They have secret signals and correspond from town to town by means of carrier pigeons . . . if they could, by means of their organisation, throw themselves in a body upon any one point, they might be successful in a *coup-de-main*.' Yet he thought that the loyalty of the country was great. 'Commerce is at a deadlock,' he wrote, 'and manufactures depressed; numbers of citizens are out of work, and the prospects of the revenue are gloomy.'²⁶⁵

'I am often very sad,' wrote the Queen. But Albert was her constant pride and she talked of the courage and comfort he gave her. 'He has that happy gift of constant cheerfulness, which is a treasure in these times.'

§ V — 1848

PRINCE ALBERT was not a blind patriot, nor was he a snob. He disliked the English fashion of living in social compartments. One night at dinner he deplored the way that British Ministers abroad imported the English '*exclusive* system of

society' into the countries of their adoption.²¹⁶ He thought that officials should mix with people '*of all grades.*'

He had the same feelings about the ruling classes at home. He declared this liberal view in public in May, when he was asked to take the chair at a meeting of a society for improving the conditions of the working classes. He disliked the patronage which inspired many of these efforts, and instead of damning strikers, he reprimanded the capitalists themselves. He warned them to be careful 'to avoid any dictatorial interference with labour and employment.' He pleaded for freedom of thought and independence of action for the workmen and he told the capitalists quite candidly that it was only ignorance which prevented the two classes from having confidence in each other. His speech fell as a novelty on English ears.

Albert worked like a Trojan. He did not refuse his vigour and enthusiasm to any cause or distress which he might be able to help or correct. He brought into his work an amazing attention to detail. Machines, houses, gardens, factories and schools attracted his eager eye and his wise suggestions: everything he touched, he improved.

Once when he went to York, he was shown a vast, new machine. The experts were at his elbow. Albert examined the machine and pointed out where a wheel should be introduced. 'Not one man in ten thousand would have noticed the omission,' said one of the experts. He went to another place and pointed out that the wrong paint was being used on the buildings. Not so very long after, the owners found that the paint was peeling, as he had thought it would. In agriculture, he invented and changed so many things that he taught English farmers new and profitable truths about their business. New strength was coming to him every year. No fraction of his energy was withheld from his duty.

In July of 1848, Albert went to York, to speak to the Royal Agricultural Society. He delighted the Yorkshire

farmers by using the phrase, 'We agriculturalists of England.' He was sensible of his success and wrote eagerly to Stockmar. 'I had to speak . . . and was immensely applauded for what I said. . . . I only mention it because I believe it will give you pleasure, as you have often urged me to have more confidence in matters of this kind.'²⁶⁷

But he was weighed down by the number of his duties. 'I never remember to have been kept in the stocks to the same extent as I am just now,' he wrote to his stepmother, in Coburg.²⁶⁸ 'The mere reading of the English, French and German papers absorbs nearly all the spare hours of the day; and yet one can let nothing pass without losing the connection and coming in consequence to wrong conclusions.'

§ VI — 1848

KING LEOPOLD'S ideas of government, sown in the rich pastures of Albert's brain, were exactly what the English character needed. The Prince was able to impose his ideas upon Ministers of every party. He quietened the unrestrained reformers and he spurred on the antiquated sluggards. The place of a constitutional monarch is that of a physician: he must apply ice to the fevered brows of politicians without any regard for their party or their attitude towards himself. Thus, not meddling in affairs of legislation, he may be the doctor of legislators. Disasters came to Prussia and France because their rulers were politicians as well as kings: Albert was careful and successful in never making their mistake. In Europe, kings held on to their territory and their rights with bitter greed, until the last moment. Then they were obliged to run away, afraid and humbled. In England and Belgium, the people were given their concessions, just before they themselves realised that their own power might allow them to take them. This way of change suited the English temperament. The Englishman believes that misunderstandings

can be made to vanish by good sense; the continental likes his constitutional development with a taste of bloodshed.

Prince Albert knew this characteristic of the English. He watched the changes in the world with broad knowledge of human nature—a knowledge which was strange in a young man of twenty-eight. He thought that among the wild tornadoes which devastated Europe, England and Belgium stood alone, ‘unshaken,’ showing the rest of Europe ‘useful standards of what constitutes real freedom.’ He reported to Stockmar: ‘Here everything goes on to a wish. The Government is weak, but it manages to get along, and the public is loyal and patriotic. . . .’²⁶⁹

If Albert gauged the English character, he also sensed the difference in the character of the Irish. He wrote to his grandmother of ‘the sore in Ireland,’ which was ‘ripe for bursting.’ He judged that England could go into the fight with the unhappy country with a clear conscience. Later in the year he wrote to his brother: ‘The leaders in the riots in Ireland have been caught, and the same people who applauded their addresses, will see them hanged with equal pleasure.’²⁷⁰

§ VII — 1848

IN AUGUST the Court withdrew to Balmoral. Before the year ended, Melbourne died, bereft of almost every power he had enjoyed. The Queen paused to recall the first years of his kindness. But she shuddered at the memory of her girlhood. ‘God knows! I never wish that time back again,’ she wrote to her uncle.

Another change in the personnel of the Lions of Europe was in the election of Louis Napoleon to the Presidency of France.

During the weeks in the Highlands Prince Albert breathed freely, stretched his arms before the Scottish scene

and was happy again. Balmoral was not yet his own, with the new rooms and Victorian furniture. He had not yet spread his invented tartan upon the chairs. The Castle was bought for the Prince of Wales from Lord Aberdeen, and the lease of twenty-seven years cost two thousand pounds.²⁷¹

Balmoral was situated in the healthiest part of the Highlands. Albert loved the mountain solitude, 'where one rarely sees a human face . . . the wild deer come creeping stealthily round the house. I, naughty man, have also been creeping stealthily after the harmless stags. . . .' He liked the granite castle with its small turrets, the birchwood and the air—glorious and clear, but icy cold.

Here he rested, growing nearer to the sturdy Highlanders, so much more like his own people than the English, if only for the hills and the trees and the more dramatic landscapes, which were so full of memories of his own land. He was happier in Scotland. The Englishman does not belong to his earth as the Scotsman does. The passionate attachments of Sir Walter Scott have never stirred in the Englishman's breast.

Albert responded to the Scottish character. He understood these people who seemed to grow from their own earth, like trees. Their feet were deep-rooted in Scotland's soil, their hands were lifted to caress its skies. They had something of the Coburger's passion for the earth. Albert was at home with them. He dreamed of a castle here, grander than the little one in which they stayed during the summer of 1848. When he came back from the hills, sitting in the still, scented evening, with a window open so that the air from the birchwood came freshly upon his face, he would take out paper and pencil and sketch his dream. He drew the turrets and the arches of the doors—he planned the windows and the rooms. The greater Balmoral, a fantastic baronial castle in Victorian clothes, fell upon the paper from the end of his pencil. But several more years were to pass before his dream came true.

Chapter Twenty-two

1849

THE COBURG idea of discipline was strong in Victoria and Albert: the Queen still smarted from the holly which her mother had pinned to the neck of her dress, as a spur towards deportment. Albert chose as tutor for his son a man who also believed in such violent methods: when he wanted the Prince of Wales to prove his faith in science, he told him to plunge his hand in ammonia and then into molten lead. The boy had faith, or a kind of fear which was more terrible than his fear of physical pain. He plunged his hand into the ammonia and then into the molten lead. Thus he came to knowledge.

The one great mistake in Prince Albert's life was in the way he sought to educate his eldest son. When the baby was born, Prince Albert had said that the 'greatest object must be to make him as unlike as possible to any of his great-uncles.'²⁷² He said nothing of his own blood, but Greville noted in his diary that it would be a further good fortune if 'no portion' of the Coburg blood should be 'found flowing in his veins and tainting his disposition.'

Depressed by their fear, shocked by the memory of the wicked great-uncles, the Queen and Prince Albert devised terrible plans to make the boy in his father's image. Nothing could have been more impossible. Their son was a pleasure-loving Hanoverian, as his mother had been, in the beginning.

Wise and good as he was, Albert was Stockmar's pupil, and the lonely recluse at the organ forgot his disappointments and sympathetic tenderness when he came to the nursery door. This was inevitable. Only a violent revolutionary could have stood out against the educational ideas of Leopold and Stockmar. This Coburg influence was the heaven of schoolmasters, who believed in educating a child without

developing it. One's gentle sympathies for Albert are soured a little by the mistakes he made in judging his son. But he knew of no other kind of education. He thought to pack a child's mind with facts. He himself had never been considered by Leopold and Stockmar as a being with a heart and a desire; his dreams had been destroyed. He had been born with the wings of Hermes on his heels, but Stockmar had changed them into spurs.

For seven years Albert had watched his son in the nursery and in the schoolroom. For seven years he searched anxiously for dark signs of the Hanoverian blood. He imagined himself and his system strong enough to overcome them if they did show themselves.

There was little of his father in the boy. Prince Albert had cried with shyness at a children's dance in Coburg. The new Prince, 'wellnigh from his cradle . . . showed signs of social instinct.' His father liked learning and grand opera. The boy liked life and he had a taste for the operette. His father was essentially German. But for some fantastic reason, the young Prince was to give his heart to France.

Lady Lyttelton had taken charge of the children when they were babies and from the beginning, the Princess Royal had shown a happy tendency towards German thinking. She was quick to learn, superior to 'Bertie' in intelligence, and she had a touch of her father's scholarship. From her cradle she grew towards her important and sad destiny in Prussia.

But it was 'Bertie' who had won Lady Lyttelton's heart. While his father and the now almost tyrannical figure of Stockmar frowned their 'Thou shalt nots' at him, Lady Lyttelton brought a more rosy tint into the nursery. She saw merit in his manners; she thought his 'childish dignity very pretty to witness.' She saw intelligence in 'his large, clear blue eyes.' But Lady Lyttelton was not alone in the nursery, for there were three special governesses, English, French



THE CHILDREN AND THE NICE ALBERT AT HOME

and German, chosen by Stockmar. The education was planned according to the desire of the master, not to the capacity of the child. There were 'a few passions and ravings' because the Prince needed tenderness as well as instruction. He was made to love and to be loved.

Albert had made of himself a rock of virtue. He was a Gibraltar of strength to his brother, to the Queen, and to all who needed him. But rocks are worn down by the very tides that caress them. Albert was a lonely man and he was tired. He wrote to his brother of his own contentment, but people who saw him spoke of the wistful expression upon his face when it was in repose. He had been lonely for so long that when his son looked up to him from the drudgery of the schoolroom, there was little understanding or sympathy between them. The garden of the Rosenau, the games, the ginger bread, the feasts, and the romantic forests were forgotten. Albert did not know that his child and that every child lives in an agony of desire to be understood—that every child has an instinct by which it knows full well the difference between being loved and being spoiled.

While England was slowly becoming conscious of the boy Prince, while the people found a new delight in seeing him in his sailor suit at Cowes or bowing in a carriage in the streets of Dublin, Stockmar and Prince Albert burned the midnight oil over vast and terrible plans for his education. Nothing was to be left to chance. There was to be unceasing surveillance by carefully chosen tutors who could answer Stockmar's definition of 'persons morally good, intelligent, well informed and experienced who fully enjoyed the parental confidence,' to check undesirable tendencies of adolescence. He was to be kept aloof from companions of his own age. Freedom in any relation of life was to be sternly denied the youth.

In later years, King Edward looked back with pain on his educational ordeal.²⁷³

In the spring of 1849, the Prince's first tutor arrived. The vast and terrible scheme was outlined for him and he set about his duties. Just as Henry Birch watched his pupil with care, lest he should falter, so was Birch himself watched by the inhuman Stockmar, who never quite withdrew from the position of trust he had made for himself.

For two years after this, Birch supervised the Prince's training; but there came a moment when Prince Albert reviewed his work and decided that the tutor was 'unsuitable.' All England was interested in the education of the heir to the throne. *Punch* had made facetious comments on the schemes, and other editors had written a little anxiously of the strict control under which the boy was living. Perhaps Birch too saw the evil in the very plan he was appointed to carry out. The boy's loneliness and fear of authority found its outlet. He came to love Birch with some of the tenderness he would have given to his parents, had he been encouraged. He wrote affectionate notes to his tutor and, creeping into his bedroom at night, he put them on his pillow. Sometimes when Birch went to his room he found a gift and a shy letter from the Prince. We do not know if Albert saw danger in such emotions, but he certainly dismissed Birch and brought in a new man to take charge of his son's education. This was Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, described by Lee as 'prim and correct.' Gibbs was a more ideal minister of Coburg educational ideas. But his methods estranged the boy from his parents. He was a teller of tales; his sense of duty was rigid and he believed in law rather than love as the basis of education. The boy's harmless tempers and misdemeanours were always reported to the Prince. It is the penalty of royalty that, in serving their people, they must leave the education of their children to strangers. A woman like Lady Lyttelton or a man like Birch might have drawn parent and child together by revealing the virtues of one to the other. The pattern of Gibbs's nature made it impossible for him to

understand this. He reported the weaknesses of the boy, day by day, and thus, he became a barrier instead of a bridge, between father and son.

In his loneliness, the Prince of Wales seemed unable to learn. His essays were not *sober*. He saw a liveliness in history and a human interest in all about him which was not going to help him to become the encyclopædia Albert wished him to be.

He knew nobody of his own age. Somebody complained of this to Albert and pointed out the dangers of such isolation. So the Prince invited carefully chosen boys from Eton to come to the Castle to tea on Sunday afternoon; but he himself stayed in the room while the boys talked to his son.

The whole nature of the struggle between master and pupil is illustrated in an incident which happened a few years afterwards. The Great Exhibition was open and the young Prince had been to see the wonders of the Crystal Palace. The boy in him was delighted by some waxwork models of the murderous thugs of India. He was obliged to write letters to the dour Baron, so he told Stockmar of his excitement over these models. Stockmar felt that he was obliged to censor such naïve enthusiasm: he reminded the child that he was 'born in a Christian and enlightened age in which such atrocious acts are not even dreamt of.'²⁷⁴ Apparently Stockmar did not know that cruelties to the mind can be more vicious than any cruelties to the body.

Chapter Twenty-three

§ 1 — 1849

THE NEW year had opened with Louis Napoleon's attempt to bring peace to France. The Queen was relieved to hear that he was 'full of courage and energy' and behaving 'extremely well.'²⁷⁵ But the ladies of the Court were indignant, because he dared to call himself *His Majesty*, 'bringing contempt on the name.'²⁷⁶ The Pope was still a fugitive from Rome. Austria soon regained its power in Northern Italy, Sicily subsided into peace—Prussia and Austria continued their painful enormities in the name of emancipation. But nearer to Great Britain's heart was India. In March the Punjab was added to the Empire, and the dejected Maharajah had to submit to the thought of his Koh-i-noor diamond blazing in the hand of the delighted Queen.

Disraeli had become leader of the Opposition. His humour and his drama were bringing a new zest to the affairs of Parliament. He scattered the blossoms of his imagination upon the matter-of-fact heads of his colleagues. 'Look at the state of France, look at the state of the whole centre of Europe,' he said. '... I find in France a Republic without Republicans and in Germany an Empire without an Emperor; and this is progress!!' Then he talked of 'the saturnalia of diplomacy' mixing 'with the orgies of politics.'²⁷⁷

Lord Palmerston had just brought the last ounce of the Royal displeasure upon his shoulders for selling arms to the Sicilian insurgents, without consulting the Cabinet. Albert wrote to his brother in May: 'Here all is going on well.' But he added: '... our ultra Tories would like to bring about a democratic crisis. Because I energetically work against their plans, they abuse me, as much as they can.'²⁷⁸

Now he wrote less of international tangles; he turned his attention to more local service for his people. Day after day,

their tables side by side, the Queen and the Prince would work diligently together. A faint playfulness was lightening their burdens now. When he went to Grimsby, Albert sent her a fooling letter, the letter of a boy, telling her that he was 'still alive,' that when he came home, covered with snow, there were 'icicles on his nose,' and that: 'Last, not least (in the Dinner-speech's phrase),' he loved his wife and remained 'her devoted husband.'

Sitting side by side at their desks, Albert and Victoria seemed to realise that their duty lay as much with human good works as with international conflicts. The simple picture of them both working hard, their children peering in at the door, would help England much more than the picture of a Queen and Prince who were forever wrangling with the lesser lions of Europe.

Albert allowed his heart to rule him—he became tired of the tangled state of Europe and he turned his energies to social improvements. There was nothing of patronage in his new mission. He was firmly convinced that only personal kindness would solve 'the democratic and social evil.' He wrote to his brother that he believed the tragedy of the unhappy poor would 'be solved first here, in England.'²⁷⁹

The Queen was obedient to his schemes. Her public letters showed that she was passionate in guarding her dignity as Queen, but when she sat alone with Albert, she regarded him with humility and adoration. In the early years, the reverse had been true. Her own dignity had mattered far more to the girl Queen than the more exalted duty to the Crown. At least she had confused the two. Albert had shown her that a Queen must stand before the public, erect, with orb and sceptre held so that they would strike awe in all beholders. But he had also taught her, through his own tender example, that when the robes and the symbols were put away, she must be humble. It would have been impossible for her to learn this through her intellect, but she had learned

it through her heart. She had put on her crown to tell Grey that there were not to be 'two fountains of Honour in the realm,' when the East India Company wished to bestow medals upon her soldiers. But when she sat beside Albert, watching him work upon his plans, she asked no more of the world than that she should be allowed to obey him. She wrote to Uncle Leopold of her eternal thankfulness. The Creator could not have sent into this troubled world '... a purer, more perfect being . . . I feel that I could *not* exist without him. . . .'²⁸⁰

§ II — 1849

THE PRINCE had a passion for statistics. They were so much more reliable than the airy theories of prejudiced politicians. In one of the many reports put before him, he found that the greater number of inmates of workhouses were domestic servants. He straightway set out to improve the relationship between employer and employed. He thought that servants should be protected from the caprice of a single master who might give them bad characters. He made plans for the improvement of workmen's dwellings: he had given a lead to the country in the flats which he had built in Kennington.

While the Queen obeyed, Albert worked. There seemed to be no fault in this lonely, industrious man. The facts of his story reveal no ill, beyond the errors he made in educating his son. In his thirtieth year, he had lost the first, keen beauty of his youth. He had grown fat at his desk—his cheeks had bulged from boyhood's delicate lines, the lissom ease had gone from his walk.

But if youth had faded—if Galahad had grown heavy and more pedestrian in his stride, a new beauty had come to illuminate his form. His character, his purity and his unselfishness were stamped upon his face. People who saw him at that time, wrote of the 'dear virtue' in his eyes, the pensive,

but wholly unselfish smile he gave to all who required something of him. 'He had a staid, earnest, thoughtful look when he was in a grave mood; but when he smiled . . . his whole countenance was irradiated with pleasure; and there was a pleasant sound and heartiness about his laugh.' Now that he was older, 'marks of thought, of care, of studiousness were there; but they were accompanied by signs of a soul at peace with itself, and which was troubled chiefly by its love for others. . . .'²⁸¹ He lived above the temptations of common men—he had compassion for the sinner, but no comprehension of the sin. The lines which came to his face were not of mistrust or licence—they were lines of sadness upon the face of a man who never had an unworthy motive in anything which he said or did.

§ III — 1849

ON THE way to Scotland, in August, the Queen and the Prince went to Ireland. This was a brave and anxious thing to do. The Queen had never looked upon Ireland as a serene jewel in her Crown. In 1846, she had written to Lord John Russell, admitting that Ireland represented 'a journey which must one day or other be undertaken.' but she had added that it was 'not a journey of pleasure, like the Queen's former ones,' and she had asked that the expenses of it should not fall upon the Civil list.

Lord Clarendon had urged the cause of Ireland early in 1849, by assuring Lord John Russell that the country was quiet again. 'Agitation is extinct, Repeal is forgotten—the seditious associations are closed—the priests are frightened and the people are tranquil.'²⁸² This visit was the Queen's own triumph. Ireland has little place in the Prince's story, but he shared with her the comforting sounds of bells and shouts and cannons, when they came to Cork. At Waterford, where the *Stromboli* had anchored a year before to

quell the lawless Irishmen, the Prince and his two sons sailed gently past in a little boat. When the Irish people saw the Royal children at Kingstown, they shouted with joy. 'Oh! Queen, dear!' screamed a fat old woman, 'make one of them Prince Patrick, and all Ireland will die for you.'²⁸³ Four thousand people walked past the Queen and the Prince at the Levée at Dublin; six thousand troops marched past them at the review in Phoenix Park. Albert spoke to the farmers of the promise of their fields, of their lamentable sufferings, and of their patience. He wrote to Stockmar: 'Our Irish tour has gone off well beyond all expectation.' To Ernst he wrote that the Irish reception was 'a most important proof that the only place in our Kingdom which was considered foul (at least as regards loyalty) is as healthy as all the other parts.'

Nevertheless they were delighted to come home to Balmoral after 'the brilliant bustle of Ireland.' 'It seems like a dream,' wrote the Queen, 'to be here in our dear Highland home again.'²⁸⁴

Chapter Twenty-four

§ 1 — 1849

IN JULY of 1849, Prince Albert invited some members of the Society of Arts to Buckingham Palace. He had a new and exciting scheme to put before them. In the few quiet hours which he had been able to wedge in between his duties, he had sketched a dream upon paper—a palace of glass, a glittering colossus in which there was to be an exhibition of world attainment.

Albert was tired of the wrangle of Europe. '... I don't like to write to Germany any more,' he complained to his brother. 'The behaviour of the governments is such that I feel ashamed. ... It is too much and therefore I turn away in disgust.'²⁸⁵ He saw nothing but unhappiness in the bitterness of the past few years. The way to stimulate humanity was to develop its health and to forget its cancers. He wanted to exalt industrial and domestic qualities and teach the discontented multitude to see that their emancipation would come through the plough and the lathe, and not through the sword.

Albert put away the truculent German newspapers and placed a sheet of clean white paper on the table in front of him; on it he sketched his dream of the great glass palace. His enthusiasm spread and excited all who came near to him. While the Chartists and the landowners had been dancing wildly in the limelight, there had been the greater class of sober Englishmen, working, trusting, sane—beating no drum to attract attention to themselves. This was to be *their* exhibition ... their harvest thanksgiving.

The Prince tested the zeal of the manufacturers. He told them that England might give away a few of her secrets in such a display of talents, but that the profit of the individual must be sacrificed for the good of the world. They swallowed

this bitter pill without murmur and many pledged themselves to his support. Then he looked across the Channel and drew many of the countries of Europe into the net of his enthusiasm.

He was careful to keep his own name out of the light. He worked silently and begged his supporters not to praise him before the manufacturers. It looked, he said, as if he were 'to be advertised and used as a means of drawing a full house,'²⁸⁶ and such means disgusted him.

To set down a list of the duties which the Prince undertook at this time would make dull reading. It is almost terrifying to think of the correspondence, the engagements, the plans and the decisions which beset him every day. It was in the evening that he sat beside the Queen, sketching, making lists, turning his dream of the crystal palace into a reality. She watched him anxiously. ' . . . He looks very ill of an evening,' she wrote to Uncle Leopold. Albert was killing himself with work.

Behind this scheme was the ideal which had grown since Albert came to England. As a young and half-willing bridegroom, he had said: 'I shall never cease to be a true German, a true Coburg and Gotha man.' By the time he was thirty, this little idea had vanished.

Albert was sensible of Britain's peculiar position in the world. He had seen Europe torn and angry, he had realised that the geographical isolation of Great Britain and the sensible basis of her human nature and character, kept her remote from the storms on the other side of the Channel. Politically, she was insulated from racial mixings and frontier jealousies: free of the theoretical obsessions of Germany, the bitter selfishness of France and the emotional dangers of the Latin South. This had been proved during the upheavals of 1847-48. Albert was still loyal to the little Duchy whence he had come, but now his ambition was vast, his courage invincible, and his unselfishness inexhaustible.

Early in his adventure the Prince had seen that England must be first in solving the problems of the poor. Now he saw that England's 'mission, duty and interest' was to put herself 'at the head of the diffusion of civilisation and the attainment of liberty.'²⁸⁷ He pleaded to the supporters who came about him that the Exhibition should be a step towards 'the unity of mankind.'

We may smile superciliously at the affected baubles of art which were gathered beneath the shining roof of the palace, but the ideal, which made Prince Albert work night and day upon his scheme, was immaculate. He simply wanted men to realise again that Civilisation would advance through thanksgiving rather than through enmity. It was Albert's wish that humanity should become more conscious of God's munificence and less conscious of its own.

§ II — 1849-50

THREE DEATHS interrupted the schemes for the Exhibition. Queen Adelaide died in December of 1849, recalling for Victoria a fleeting picture of her uncle William and the murky tradition from which the new Court had recovered. But she also recalled her uncle's goodness to herself, and wrote tenderly of the Dowager Queen, of her motherly kindness since the time of the King's death, and of her last pathetic wish, that her coffin should be carried by sailors. A 'touching tribute to her husband's memory,' for he had been England's Sailor King.

But the death which devastated the Prince was that of Anson, his friend and his secretary. They were always together, so that there are no letters or records in which one may search for proof of the affection which had grown up between them. But we know from the Queen's letters that Anson was a great and good man. His quiet sense and unprejudiced conduct had brought him near to the Prince's

heart. It might be said that Peel and Anson were the Prince's two great friends in England. Theirs was the kind of honesty which made it possible for them to understand Albert and to love him. At the time of Anson's death, Lady Lyttelton wrote of the Prince walking about the palace, 'sad and pale and grave.' Albert and Anson had worked side by side, since the day when the boy came from Coburg, shy and unprepared. The Prince had been encouraged and sustained by Anson, and now, robbed of his friend, Albert was in despair. He appealed to Stockmar to come to him from Coburg.

The weight of Albert's troubles increased. Politicians and newspapers made a sudden stand against him and sneered at his scheme for the Exhibition. Extremists in the church thought his plan arrogant and deserving of wrath from heaven. Citizens foresaw riots and villainy because of the possible influx of foreigners. Doctors threatened plagues. *The Times* supported a band of politicians in abusing Albert for selecting Hyde Park as the site for his crystal palace. 'Now our Exhibition is to be driven from London,' Albert wrote to Ernst, '... the patronisers who are afraid, the radicals who want to show their power over the Crown Property (the Parks), and *The Times*, whose solicitor bought a house near to Hyde Park, are abusing and insulting.' The night upon which the letter was written was to decide the question of the site, so Albert added: '... We shall probably be defeated and have to give up the whole Exhibition. You see that we do not lie on a bed of roses.'²⁸⁸

The country was enjoying greater prosperity. Exports had increased by ten millions in the year, machines were busy and only the farmers groaned in the gloom of their condition. Palmerston had made mischief over the Greek claims²⁸⁹ and Parliament had risen to distinguished but choleric eloquence. Dissensions, already well chronicled, kept statesmen busy. Peel, Gladstone and Palmerston himself

made speeches which belong to one of the most thrilling and brilliant chapters of our government history. But they were times of nervousness for the Prince—they brought prominence to statesmen, but agitation to the country. Palmerston vindicated himself and Albert wrote of the speech to his brother: 'You and all Europe will certainly feel with us in the unhappy combination of circumstances which granted our *immoral one for Foreign affairs* such a triumph in the Commons. We are still more weakened by it, we and all those who wish for Christian straightforwardness, peace and love. The revenge of fate will not fall on the sinners, but on the poor country!' ²⁸⁰

Late in June, a demented ex-officer named Pate struck the Queen with a heavy cane. She had just left Cambridge House, whither she went to see the Duke of Cambridge, who was ill. The man rushed forward and struck her across the face. She sat perfectly still. . . . The Prince wrote to his brother of their unhappiness, the Queen's head 'green and brown' from the blow, one sorrow following at the heels of another, until early in August, when his cup was filled to the brim by the death of Peel.

Albert was still more alone, for the confident help of both Anson and Peel had been taken from him. He wrote to his aunt, the Duchess of Kent, who was abroad. ' . . . blow after blow has fallen upon us. . . . And now death has snatched from us Peel, the best of men, our truest friend, the strongest bulwark of the Throne, the greatest statesman of his time! You know the whole extent of our loss. . . . '

The Prince was sustaining more than he could bear and the Queen watched him anxiously. The public outcry against the Exhibition joined with his bereavement to weaken Albert's resistance. All his letters and all his plans show that his motives were irreproachable; but again England would not believe in his rectitude. Something of the old despair seemed to possess him—the despair he had felt when he

was leaving his brother, to face the English adventure, alone.

The Queen wrote to Stockmar. 'Pray, do listen to our entreaties to come. . . . Since the night of your poor friend's death he again wakes so early, and this is a sad distress to me. Clark admits that it is the mind. . . . Diet has been of no avail.'

Albert rallied from his weakness. He wrote once to his brother of Peel, of the loss to Europe, the loss to England and the 'irreparable' loss to the Crown and to themselves, personally. Then he returned to the plans for his Exhibition with sad but grim intention. There were to be eleven miles of tables and fifteen thousand exhibitors. The exhibits were to be valued at two million pounds, sixty thousand foreigners were to come from all the lands of the world to see his wonder. More than six million people were to crowd into the colossal glass palace to see his achievement, made in the face of opposition and prejudice. His duty was not to one generation, but to the immortal story of the country of his adoption. Albert worked for peace in industry, prosperity between nations and better understanding of foreign motives. Joseph Paxton was already designing the glass palace for him—nothing would daunt him now. The Hyde Park site was assured, the machines of every country were making rare and wonderful exhibits—the packing cases were already arriving at the ports of the country. The little fairs which he had seen at Frankfort, as a boy, had given him an idea which was to prove Napoleon's gibe—he would help the English to prove themselves to be the greatest shopkeepers in the world.

§ III — 1850

IN AUGUST, the Court was at Osborne. Prince Albert wrote to his brother on the 9th: ' . . . in a few days we shall close the House of Commons, which has become quite mad. . . . It is a

fixed idea that the country is ruined financially and that everything must be reduced. Yet it is stated that the accumulation of capital is increased by eleven million pounds every year.'

Palmerston was the next dissentient to draw Albert away from the mountain of papers, the plans of the Exhibition, the lists, the schemes for policing London. He had enraged the Queen by his persistent neglect. She would not allow a dispatch to leave the country without her sanction, but he ignored her instruction again and again. On this occasion, it was Albert who wrote the letter to Lord John Russell complaining of Palmerston's disobedience, 'not from oversight, or negligence, but upon principle.' The contemporary record by Martin talks of Palmerston's 'imprudence and insubordination.'

When Palmerston was obliged to make his explanations, it was not to his Sovereign, but to Prince Albert that he came, 'much agitated . . . with tears in his eyes.'²⁹¹ The Court was still enjoying the warmth and quiet of Osborne. Albert had been used to a 'bland smile' upon Palmerston's face. Now the Minister came to him in contrition, and the tears in his eyes caused Albert to be more tender with him.

The Prince's memorandum of the conversation is an epic of justice and good sense. It is too long for quotation here, but the document will always stand as perhaps the finest proof of the Prince's sense of justice and of his ability to build up a conversation gently, thinking always of the main purpose and never of self justification. Next day he spoke to Lord John Russell of the interview and told him 'how low and agitated' he had found Palmerston, 'almost to make me pity him.' Lord John answered him 'that he thought what had passed had done a great deal of good.'

The months passed. Louis Philippe died at Claremont and the Prince went to the bereaved family. The Queen was 'the picture of a shipwreck, left alone on a lonely island, getting

thinner and thinner from all the misery in her country.' They were 'all more or less suffering.' Then came the death of the Queen of the Belgians, leaving Leopold again 'alone and desolate in the world.' There was no peace for Albert, until the Court went to Balmoral. Here he smiled again. He could spread his plans upon a table and look out to the Scottish landscape. He loved the people here, 'primitive, true-hearted and without guile.' The dreary sophistication of the English life no longer intruded. There was a quaint simplicity about every scene, every human contact which engaged his attention. When the Forbes of Strathdon passed by, seeing the turrets of Balmoral, Captain Forbes took off his shoe and filled it with whisky. Standing beside the Dee, Forbes and his fifty men drank the Queen's health from the shoe, before they passed on.

On the way back to London Albert paused in York to speak in praise and memory of Peel. His address was magnificent, quiet, deep in thought, and tender in appreciation. The immediate reward was a storm of praise. But the Englishman does not willingly feel that any virtue or gift is as great as his own. Again the old and mean suspicions crept in. Did the Prince write his own speeches? They 'were said to be too good for a Prince.'

This time, *The Spectator* came forward in Albert's defence. 'He has never made a speech in public, on any occasion of mark, without suggesting matter for useful thought . . . there is an individuality about them, which stamps their real authorship. . . . If he were removed from us, we should miss one of the least obtrusive, but most useful of our public men.'

•

Chapter Twenty-five

§ 1 — 1851

WHEN THE new year opened, the glittering Palace was already rising above the calm green spaces of Hyde Park. It was one thousand feet long, and the transept rose one hundred feet towards the sky.

‘A blazing arch of lucid glass
Leaps like a fountain from the grass
To meet the sun.’²⁹²

Workmen were painting the iron framework cobalt blue and, between the pillars, there were to be rich scarlet hangings. Wonder of wonders, was ‘a great elm tree, in full foliage,’ stretching out its branches over white statuary, fountains, and packing cases. ‘The goods for the Exhibition are being brought into the building,’ Albert wrote to his brother. ‘The building is a real work of marvellous art.’

But he was ‘more dead than alive, from overwork.’ His opponents worked ‘with might and main, to throw all the old women into a panic,’ and to drive him crazy. The warnings of his enemies were fantastic. The foreign visitors were certain ‘to murder Victoria’ and himself and ‘to proclaim the Red Republic in England.’

The year had begun miserably. The Pope’s effort to re-establish a hierarchy of Bishops throughout the kingdom had devastated the British Parliament. Lord John Russell had resigned and then resumed office. The Queen still regretted the passing of the Ministries of Melbourne and Peel. It was impossible for her to like either Russell or Palmerston and she was at variance with them all the time. Prince Albert had reconciled her to Peel and she had become his friend, but she could never like these

new, imprudent statesmen. 'The truth is the Queen and John dislike each other,' wrote Greville.²⁹³ She was no less certain that Palmerston's existence was also an offence to her and a danger to the country. Nor was Albert encouraged to like the new Parliament. Colonel Sibthorp had risen in the House and 'prayed that hail or lightning might descend from heaven' to defeat Albert's plans for the Exhibition. The English hated all innovations, but never so passionately as when they came in the hands of a foreigner. There was no end to the insults and distrust which Britain was capable of heaping upon him.

§ II — 1851

THE FIRST of May was the glorious day of the Prince's life. The Great Exhibition was opened; it was a 'complete and beautiful triumph.' It proved Albert's worth to the British public and it raised a memorial to his wisdom and foresight. Princes had come from Europe and India; alert business men crossed from America, and loyal producers brought their exhibits from the Colonies.

Albert led the Queen into the Crystal Palace, past the great iron gates, the palms, the statues, and the beautiful crystal fountain. They held the hands of their two elder children. There is something pathetic about the prints made of the occasion: the little Queen and her adored Prince beside her, the two children, passing into the fabulous palace, the lines of trumpeters, the groups of smart English society who had watched the career of this young German Prince with contemptuous disfavour. It was *their* day. It was Albert's day and Albert's exhibition. While statesmen had wrestled and the mob had screamed for freedom, which it did not understand, he had worked like a beaver. And this was the fruit of his labour.

The little group moved forward. The Queen was in

an ecstasy. 'God bless my dearest Albert, God bless my dearest country,' she wrote. Six million people were to stare in astonishment at the wonder he had made. When the Queen and the Prince had opened the Exhibition, they walked about to see the most astounding miscellany ever displayed in one place. The world had made obeisance before the Prince and the Queen. A Chinese citizen had detached himself from the multitude and bowed low before Victoria. A German and a Frenchman argued in the crowd about English loyalty. 'It is a principle,' said the German. 'No, it is a passion,' insisted the Frenchman, and while the organ played and the trumpets blared, he took out his notebook and wrote: 'In England loyalty is a passion.'

Day after day, the Queen went with Albert to the Crystal Palace. There were eleven miles of tables and displays to be seen. The Rajah of Travancore had sent an ivory throne; there were bedsteads in zebra wood, with figures in panels, and curtains, looped again and again. There was a riot of terra-cotta and majolica, lacquer work from Lahore, jewelled weapons from Madrid, Swiss cabinets with orgies of carving upon them, vases from Stoke-on-Trent, church plate from Coventry, produce and pretty devices from the Colonies. And there was 'a submarine boat . . . the shape of a broad-backed carp.' The Queen was 'quite beaten' and her head 'bewildered from the myriads of beautiful and wonderful things. . . .'

'Albert's name is immortalised,' she wrote. Alabaster goddesses rose from marble shells in which water bubbled in many colours. An American organ, crowned by a colossal eagle, spilled all kinds of music upon the heads of the people; the great elm tree moved gently in the cool, fresh wind which came in from the park. There were thousands of objects of beauty, fire-screens, grates and fenders, ornamented and lavish, stands for palms, bowls of mother-o'-pearl set in ormolu, clocks set in tangles of metal design, cupids

rising from leaves, birds trembling upon twigs, stiff and brassy, chandeliers of crystal, carpets and cushions worked with minute patterns and sentimental colours.

British industry was flourishing; Victorian decoration was born. The wives of the country would put all their ugly old English furniture up into the garrets. There were to be beds with Indian fretwork panels in the great houses of England, tables were to be gay with stiff and jolly imitation flowers, walls were to be lively with floral sprays and birds. But most important of all, the world was coming to London to see an exhibition of the products of peaceful occupation and enlightened husbandry. Here were no clamorous statesmen, no dishonest princes nor abdicating kings. Here was Albert's lesson to the world—that swords should be beaten into ploughshares. 'All is owing to Albert—All to him,' wrote the Queen. And it was true.

.

Chapter Twenty-six

§ 1 — 1851

PRINCE ALBERT was economical. More than this, he never touched any business concern without improving it. But the Queen was a spendthrift and she had the Hanoverian love for seeing money depart as freely as it came. '... she is naturally inclined to be generous but the Prince is fond of money,' wrote Greville.²⁹⁴

Albert had already saved two hundred thousand pounds of the Queen's income to pay for Osborne House. Up to the time of his coming to England the management of the Duchy of Cornwall²⁹⁵ had been mildly scandalous. George the Fourth had squeezed the golden goose of the Duchy so cruelly that he was obliged to sign over the estates to Messrs. Coutts. A banker had become Duke of Cornwall, in all but name.

As the heir to the throne was a minor, Prince Albert had become chief guardian of the Duchy's affairs. In March of 1847, Greville wrote that Albert had done this work so well that the Duchy estates were producing seventy thousand pounds a year; a fit enough fortune for the Prince of Wales, when he came of age.

Albert's control of affairs in the Court was now complete. There was no question as to who ruled the family fortunes. 'She acts in everything by his inspiration and never writes a letter that he does not dictate every word of,'²⁹⁶ wrote Greville. 'His knowledge and information are astonishing, and there is not a department of the Government regarding all the details and management of which he is not much better informed and more capable than the Minister at the head of it....'²⁹⁷

The Prince showed the same meticulous care, the same business acumen, and, added to these, astonishing foresight,

in managing the finances of the 1851 Exhibition. When it closed, in the autumn, there was a profit of £186,000 to be disposed of. When we recall the miserable failure of our own generation to make a financial success of the exhibition at Wembley, this achievement of 1851 may be thought of as remarkable.

§ II — 1851

PRINCE ALBERT swept all the Exhibition papers away from his table and began a new plan. Another fresh sheet of paper was drawn in front of him—together with a map of Kensington.

In Kensington Gore, there were about thirty acres of land, to be bought for £50,000. The Prince devised a stupendous plan for education. . . . He imagined thirty acres of land covered by great buildings which were to be shrines for Science and Art. Here, throbbing in the midst of growing London, there was to be a centre for education and knowledge, unequalled in the world. For hundreds of years, thousands of students would come here, to be equipped and improved. His Crystal Palace was to be the financial father of the biggest educational scheme attempted in his time.

A whole book might be written upon the achievements of the 1851 Exhibition Commissioners. Working near to the lines laid down by the Prince, they have probably done more for education than any individual benefactor, including Rhodes.

‘I have . . . made up my mind to retreat into my shell as quickly as possible,’ Albert wrote to Stockmar, when the Exhibition closed in the autumn. ‘. . . but I am not free to choose as regards the considerable surplus with which we shall wind up. For its application I have devised a plan. . . .’ Then he proceeded to tell him of the thirty acres of land in Kensington Gore, and of the grand buildings which should

grow upon them. His plan was followed, almost to the letter.

About eighty years after the closing of the Exhibition, *The Times* reviewed the brilliant success of the Commissioners who had fulfilled Albert's plans. *The Times*, which spent so much space in criticising the living Prince and in belittling his efforts, had learned wisdom with the perspective of years. 'Sneers at the Prince Consort are as far behind the times as the faded jokes about aspidistras and antimacassars. . . . The sterling qualities of the man make his fame secure.' Thus the leader writer expressed the newspaper's view of the Prince's memory. 'He was patient and courteous under an intolerable deal of snubbing and misprision. For all his uninviting sense of duty he was no dullard. He had a clear, sensible mind and worked hard with it.'

The same issue of *The Times* contained a review of the work done with the income of the Exhibition profits. It is little short of prodigious. The grand museums and galleries are the serene proof of the Prince's foresight. The educational institutions, of which a list^{287A} is made on pp. 296, 297, open up the way to success for hundreds of students, year after year. In the present day, two hundred science scholars working in responsible advisory and administrative posts in industry and public service, and three hundred principals and professors and lecturers in universities and colleges have made their way to success through the scholarships granted from the funds of the Exhibition Commissioners.

Such are the educational influences that have sprung from the Prince's wisdom.

Chapter Twenty-seven

1851

BY THIS time, Albert was 'King to all intents and purposes.' Greville made this assertion and added that while the Queen had 'the title he is really discharging the functions of the Sovereign.'

Albert used his increasing power with good sense, but also with the meticulousness of the German school-master. There grew in him a love for managing the affairs and lives of other people. There was seldom a political tornado in Europe which did not inspire him to write a long memorandum, sane, cold, and faintly dictatorial. His sense of right saved his judgments from becoming dangerous, but he developed a desire to lay down moral and civil laws for the government of the entire world.

The Office of Minister for Foreign Affairs would have delighted him. What did not delight him was the way that Palmerston filled the office. Late in October, Palmerston aroused the Court and his colleagues to splendid indignation. Kossuth, the emancipator of Hungary, had arrived in England. In fine Elizabethan English, learned from his Shakespeare, he was spilling trouble wherever he went, denouncing the Emperors of Russia and Austria. To all intents and purposes, England was on friendly terms with these two monarchs. But Palmerston expressed his willingness to receive Kossuth. Lord John Russell was obliged to call a meeting of the Cabinet Council and he almost forbade Palmerston to see Kossuth. But Palmerston still sponsored the Hungarian cause and he received addresses from Kossuth's supporters, in his rooms in Downing Street—addresses in which the Emperors of Russia and Austria were referred to as 'odious and detestable assassins.'²⁹⁸

The Queen was 'vastly displeased' and Greville vowed

that this was 'the worst thing' Palmerston had ever done. The Prince fostered the Royal indignation which became magnificent anger in December.

On the 4th, news of the *coup-d'état* in Paris reached the Queen at Osborne. French affairs were in such a delicate state that the Prince and the Queen were afraid of anything Palmerston might do. They prepared a letter. The British Ambassador in Paris must be told in all haste to remain impartial and 'take no part whatever in what is passing.' The letter went to the Minister through Lord John Russell. But even such diplomacy did not stay Palmerston's hand. In spite of the Royal precaution, Palmerston had communicated indirectly with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressing his entire approbation of the act of the President.

The Queen and Prince Albert almost choked with indignation. Here was the final impertinence from a man with whom they had nothing in common, in thought or in manner. Palmerston had long ago won the affection of his country. He served England for England's sake. He would sacrifice principle and ideal if they interfered with the security of English people and England's reputation abroad. He worked with grand gesture and instinctive decision. Albert's methods were more pedantic: there was no touch of the theatre about him. Palmerston was different from Albert in almost every way. He was lenient in matters of morality and he had the pretty patronage for the Ten Commandments which was elegant in a gentleman. Even if he did not have the air of an aristocrat, he was conspicuous in the drawing rooms of London, with the aid of a clever wife—a woman who knew and ruled society when she chose.

This was the society which sneered at the Queen and the Prince. The sober efforts to serve, the conscience made in the Lutheran mould—these still aroused disdain among the English peers. According to their creed, Albert was

not quite a gentleman. It had never occurred to an English peer that a foreign Prince was much better than an English baronet. There was something beautifully arrogant but very cruel about the way in which the Court was viewed by this older class of Englishmen.

Albert and the Queen had half won the hearts of the mass of people. When they went to the City Ball, given in appreciation of the Exhibition, a million people waited in the streets until three o'clock in the morning to watch them drive past. But the class to which Palmerston belonged, the class which did not go to exhibitions or plan workmen's dwellings or experiment with sewage and new mechanical devices, still held itself aloof from them. Albert was indifferent. At least, he showed no anxiety over this neglect. He worked with tremendous energy, gradually undermining his bodily strength, to do what was right before Stockmar, Uncle Leopold and his own conscience.

He thought that all would be benefited if only the 'immoral one for foreign affairs' could be exposed and dismissed into ignominious retirement. There was a third person whose attitude was interesting in this moral struggle between Palmerston and the Crown. In the early days, Lord John had been openly rude to Albert and Victoria. Once when they asked him for 'his opinion and advice on some matter . . . he sent no answer at all.'²⁹⁹ But the Exhibition had helped him to realise Albert's talents. He wrote to the Queen that he thought: ' . . . the Prince's character very extraordinary for abilities, judgment, information, and a sympathy for all the sorrows and joys of his fellow-creatures.'³⁰⁰

Now that Albert had enlisted Lord John's appreciation, he had a lieutenant for his war on Palmerston. Palmerston snubbed Lord John as ruthlessly as he snubbed the Queen. His letters also lay unanswered on Palmerston's desk. Now Lord John was angry, and the

Prince's hand was strengthened. When the shocking news of Palmerston's behaviour over the *coup-d'état* came to Victoria and Albert at Osborne, they remembered the long and sinister list of his crimes. He had betrayed them over the Spanish marriages, he had ignored their wishes in the Schleswig-Holstein affair; he had, in fact, twisted them around his little finger on more than one occasion. The indignation reached its final point in December and Lord John was forced to act, when Palmerston substantiated his verbal approval of the French President's action with an official dispatch to the British Ambassador in Paris. Lord John wrote to Palmerston that he was 'reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion that the conduct of foreign affairs can no longer be left in your hands with advantage to the country.'

Palmerston gave up his seals. Lord Granville was appointed in his stead and the Queen and Albert sighed and then smiled. Lady Palmerston wrote that Albert could now manage the foreign office with 'pliable Granville' in the place of her husband.

Albert wrote very little. He never crowed over his victories. He was equally expressionless in dealing with success and failure. But, in January, he admitted to his brother that he was overwhelmed in 'preparing the campaigns we must still have with Palmerston, that we get the better of him and that he disappear *forever* from our foreign office.'

Greville wrote: '*Palmerston is out.* . . . I nearly dropped off my chair.' The Queen wrote an excited letter to King Leopold. ' . . . he has done with the Foreign Office for ever.' She joined with Albert in being heartily amused because the newspapers referred to Palmerston as 'the veteran statesman.' Seeing him safely expelled, she was able to join Albert and the children in spending 'a very happy Christmas.'

Chapter Twenty-eight

§ 1 — 1852

PRINCE ALBERT was never wholly pleased by the way in which English people hugged the illusion of friendship with France. In 1852, English statesmen realised that the new Emperor might have the same greedy desire for territory which had sent the first Napoleon marauding over the face of Europe. Albert had never wavered in his feelings for the French. Now, with public opinion to support him, he threw all his energies into the defence of the country. Before defining these energies, it is interesting to remember that Albert had twice refused the supreme command of the Army. This in spite of Greville's cruel gibe that he was 'full of ambition and the desire of governing and having political influence.'

In refusing the command, in 1850, Albert had written to the Duke of Wellington: 'I feel sure that, having undertaken the responsibility, I should not be satisfied to leave the business and real work in the hands of another.'

When he first came to England, as early as 1843, Albert had pressed an opinion upon the Duke of Wellington. There had been a duel which caused a scandal at the time and the Prince wrote to the Duke, urging that Courts of Honour should be instituted. He agreed that honour was a treasure to be guarded jealously, but he thought that duelling was an 'unchristian and barbarous custom.' The Duke was less certain. He thought that only public opinion could bring about a change. The Prince did not succeed in establishing his Courts of Honour, but he was partly satisfied by the Amended Articles issued in April of 1844, declaring it to be 'suitable to the character of honourable men to apologise and offer redress for wrong or insult committed, and equally so for the party aggrieved to accept frankly and cordially

explanations and apologies for the same.³⁰¹ D'Auvergne, who could always make the truth about England seem rather unpalatable, says that 'Englishmen henceforward ceased to defend their honour, real or conventional, with the sword, and found thumping damages in the Courts a much more agreeable compensation for the loss of wife or reputation.'³⁰²

Albert again turned his attention to the Army in February of 1852. Under Louis Napoleon, France was a nerve-wracking neighbour, and it was doubtful if, in a moment of emergency, England could mass her forces and intimidate prospective invaders. 'Albert grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business,' wrote the Queen to King Leopold, adding that she grew 'daily to dislike them more and more.' Her duties as a wife and mother were sufficient for her now. Almost every two years she had borne a baby. The school-room was full of children and full of problems. She gave Albert the public arena, unreservedly, and then she made the astonishing admission to her uncle: 'We women are not made for governing.'

The fear of France made Albert search the records of the country's defences and he was appalled by what he found. He wrote to Lord John Russell: 'This is the third time during the Queen's reign that an apprehension of war and consequent panic about invasion have seized the public mind of this country.' He urged the Prime Minister to send him statements 'showing the whole of our means at present available, both naval and military.' He had put a match to a lively rocket.

Within the next few months, Russell's Ministry fell; Palmerston won the day in the House, over the debate upon the proposed militia, and a new Ministry was formed under Lord Stanley, now become Lord Derby: 'a very sorry Cabinet,'³⁰³ which did not include Palmerston. There was an energetic shuffling of the honours, and Disraeli became

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Albert wrote a dejected letter to his brother. 'Here an unable ministry is dragging on its existence and it is giving up the principle that gave it its life—"Protection." . . . The opposition is totally disorganised. Lord John Russell has lost all power over his party. Lord Palmerston is independent and will probably go with the Protectionists. The Peelites have separated because Sir James Graham turned considerably to the left and Mr. Gladstone pursues bigotry. Lord Derby has podagra and next week we shall probably break up.' Yet he thought the 'prosperity in the country unusually great.' Especially the lower classes were 'very well off.'³⁰⁴

There was a brief rest at Osborne, for the Queen's birthday. The tangle of political affairs was depressing, but Albert was saved from complete pessimism by the success of the class of people who traded solidly and lived without the arena of politics. ' . . . here one can scarcely remember a time when the people were so well off, and trade and manufactures so flourishing,' Albert wrote to his stepmother. 'Our Protectionist Ministry hardly ventures to name the word Protection, and goes to the next election upon Free Trade principles. This furnishes the most brilliant confirmation of Peel's statesmanship, though he has not been spared to enjoy the triumph. . . . The children are well. They grow apace, and develop new virtues daily, and also new naughtinesses. The virtues we try to retain, and the naughtinesses to throw overboard.'

The Prince and the Queen walked in the garden at Osborne together, they smelled the orange trees upon the terrace and allowed the scent to awaken memories of the quiet life in Germany. They planned amusements for the children and in the evening, when all was still, they sat upon a sofa and read the *Mémoires de St. Simon* aloud. Or they would move across the room and, with Albert sitting at the piano, they would sing. His tired, affectionate hands would

seek in the keys what he had sought in the organ at Windsor, many years before.

Victoria's voice would waken the hushed room, and then Albert would join with her, singing:

The husband's heart is bowed unto the dust,
But still the wife looks up with fearless trust,
To heaven's pure light, up to the stars beyond,
And a tear falls, that says, 'Do not despond.'

Their loneliness was pathetic. Power was a very little compensation for the long drudgery of affairs . . . it did not sustain them when they were thus alone, so curiously estranged in feeling and sensibility from those about them. Their courtiers were English, their life was grand; at heart they were sentimental, homely, with a passionate desire to be the *haus herr* and *haus frau*, seated beside their fire. There is nothing cruel in this observation. Albert had no friends. Year after year he dreamed of the Rosenau: he wrote of the trees, the scents he remembered, the gardens, the little castles. He pressed dead blossoms in his Prayer Book. 'Sentimentality is a plant that cannot grow in England,' he wrote to his brother. ' . . . an Englishman, when he finds that he is being sentimental, becomes frightened as at the thought of having a dangerous illness, and he shoots himself.'

Then he added: 'I think the plant is smothered by reading so many newspapers.'³⁰⁵

§ II — 1852-53

'I CAN hardly believe that in five years I may have a married daughter,' Albert wrote to Ernst, in September. His thirty-third birthday had just passed, with letters from Coburg, pictures and gifts. 'Our birthdays are beginning to make us rather old, I wonder if you have the same feeling. Perhaps it

arises in me from seeing Youth growing up around me. . . . Prosperity is very great here, the bank has twenty-four million pounds sterling in gold and silver in the cellars.'

The elections passed, but they did not materially improve the position. Protection faded from the political platform; the year moved on to the death of the Duke of Wellington. The Queen and the Prince were genuinely devastated by this loss. He had always been a safe rock in their turbulent sea, living a life 'cloudless to the very end; glorious, great, unstained.'³⁰³ 'The whole world has suffered a loss,' wrote Albert, 'we especially have lost a good friend.'

Then, as if the cloak of the soldier were falling upon his own shoulders, Albert talked of armaments and war, and he accepted some of the offices which had been filled by the Duke. Greville chose the occasion to make a mean comment. The Prince, in his opinion, had 'shown little judgment in *making* himself heir of his military appointments and there is something ridiculous as well as odious in his doing so.'³⁰⁷ The taunt was cruel and not justified. Albert had already twice refused the command of the Army. On the previous occasion, he had felt that he could not spare the time to assume the responsibilities, and he would not accept the honour without the labour. Now he threw himself wholeheartedly into the preparations for war. 'We are cleaning our old rusty cannons,' he wrote to Ernst.'³⁰⁸ 'We are building fortifications, we have 80,000 men ready and we are improving our weapons. As regards the latter I shall be much obliged if you could procure me a Prussian needle gun. I should think you could easily get one from Erfurt and send it to me direct.'

The Prince was moving on to the greatest trial of his life, and his anxieties for Britain's defence were to lead to a cruel misjudgment of his motives. He had one staunch ally in his desire for defences. Disraeli, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had at last come near to the Crown. His clever

letters were shining occasions in the daily life of the Court. One day he apologised for having written 'a somewhat crude note,' but he was certain that the Queen would prefer 'a genuine report' to 'a more artificial and prepared statement.' She was receiving the letters of the Jew whom she had disliked, 'with satisfaction,' especially when they told her that he was ready to 'provide efficiently for the defence of the country.' It was supporting a scheme which had become Albert's passion.

In the New Year there was a change in the Ministry. 'One almost fancies oneself in a lunatic asylum,' Albert wrote to Stockmar. Hardly had the fear of France subsided, because of the new Emperor's avowals of friendship, when Lord Derby was obliged to retire, and create another political crisis, with the added annoyance that, in the new Ministry, Palmerston was to take office. Lord Aberdeen had succeeded in obtaining a union between the Peelites and, under him, the new Ministry came into power. Albert wrote again to his brother that the new Ministry was one of 'extraordinary talent, discipline and perseverance.' 'Even Palmerston belongs to it,' he continued, 'and if he is in a department in which he has to work like a horse, he cannot do any mischief.' Two months after he wrote: 'Our Ministry is doing very well and it gains the confidence of the country continually. We are continuing our fortifications in the ports, as well as increasing and drilling our militia. This year we shall have 85,000 men. All this guarantees peace. . . . The most threatening place in Europe is at present Turkey.'³⁰⁹

§ III — 1853

ENGLAND DRIFTED towards the Crimean War. All the powers except Russia had agreed to accept the new Emperor of the French and the Queen did not find it in the least difficult to address him as '*Mon Frère*.' But the Czar was

adamant. He would not accept Louis Napoleon as an equal and Louis Napoleon was not likely to forget this insult in the disturbed year which followed.

Albert went on with his preparations. He conceived the idea of a permanent training camp; Aldershot grew from his plans.³¹⁰ In June, troops marched into the camp at Chobham and 'established themselves in a line of tents extending over upwards of two miles.' The Prince drove down, slept in a tent to take part in the manoeuvres, and came back to London with a desperate cold. The Court eagerly watched the development of these new and vigorous schemes. The Queen went to Chobham and, as she watched 'Our dear camp,' she broke into a new ecstasy over Albert's achievements. She wrote to the Belgian King: 'When I think that this camp, and all our large fleet, are without doubt the result of Albert's assiduous and unceasing representations to the late and present Government, without which I fully believe very little would have been done, one may be proud and thankful; but, as usual, he is so modest, that he allows no praise.'³¹¹

While training camps were spawning from the English earth, the navy was strengthening itself upon the sea. The word *war* was whispered in the streets . . . the preparations spread and reached their greatest glory at Spithead. 'The finest fleet perhaps which England ever fitted out,' Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar. ' . . . forty ships of war of all kinds, all moved by steam-power but three, is assembled at Spithead; one hundred steamboats with spectators are expected.' Afterwards he wrote: 'The great naval review has come off . . . the *Duke of Wellington* with 131 guns . . . went, without sails, and propelled only by the screw, *eleven miles an hour*.' The wonder called for italics. ' . . . I must rejoice to see that achieved which I had struggled so long and hard to effect. . . . I still suffer a good deal from rheumatism in the right shoulder, which makes even writing difficult.'

§ IV — 1853-54

FOR A brief interlude, the Court was at Balmoral. The new house was 'up one storey.' Pleased with the strength of the Ministry, Albert's letters were faintly jubilant. He wrote, 'with a sprig' in his cap, after having 'knocked over four stags.'

But the Eastern question became more than a menace. The tangle of international affairs leading up to the Crimean War need not be described here, but one cannot pass over the dramatic incident of Palmerston's resignation from the Ministry and the new storm of abuse which fell upon Albert's head.

'No one will believe the true cause of his retirement,' Albert wrote to Coburg. The cause was 'his dislike of Lord John's plan of Reform.'

The public did not know the true cause of Palmerston's sudden resignation. So the gap was filled with invention. Albert was a German and the friend of Russia. Thus they argued, believing that he had worked *for* the Coburgs and *against* England, by forcing Palmerston to resign. He was in despair. 'The people have generously made me their scape-goat,' he wrote to Ernst. The accusations against him became common choruses in the streets.

'We'll send him home and make him groan,
Oh Al! you've played the deuce then;
The German lad has acted sad
And turned tail with the Russians.'

'There is no kind of treason to the country of which I have not been guilty,' he wrote to Stockmar. '. . . All this must be born tranquilly.' The malicious scandal grew until it was said that Prince Albert was a traitor to his Queen, that

he had been impeached for high treason, arrested and committed to the Tower.³¹² The astonishing rumour drew the crowds of London towards the river: they waited in thousands, pressing against the Tower walls, to see the Queen and the Prince brought in as prisoners.³¹³

While anger and distrust were being poured upon him, and while he was being accused of working for Russia's cause, Albert was writing thus to his brother: '... The naked position is this; we and France are determined not to allow Russia to force Turkey into concessions which we consider unjust nor to allow Russia to destroy and conquer Turkey.'³¹⁴

At last Albert was angry. He wrote a long letter to Stockmar, complaining of the 'madhouse' in which he was obliged to live. Ever since he came to England, praise and pence had been given to him grudgingly. Yet there was barely a note of complaint, even in the most confidential letters to his brother. 'Peel cut down my income, Wellington refused me my rank, the Royal Family cried against the foreign interloper, the Whigs in office were only inclined to concede to me just as much space as I could stand upon.' Thus he recollected the beginning. 'Victoria has taken the whole affair greatly to heart,' he continued.

Even Greville was angered by the attacks on Albert. He thought the 'abomination' was 'got up, managed, and paid for by Louis Napoleon, Walewski, and Palmerston.' He believed that Palmerston, goaded by the Court dislike for his very existence, would be 'capable of anything,' and that he was 'excessively reckless, daring, and vindictive.'³¹⁵

Parliament met at the end of January and Albert's name was cleared. Lord Derby spoke in the Upper House, Walpole vindicated him in the Commons. His position was at last made clear, and he was able to write to Ernst, 'my political status and activity, which up to this time have been silently assumed, have now been asserted in Parliament and vindicated without a dissentient voice.'³¹⁶

Albert had been unhappy but sensible over the abuse heaped upon him. He saw that the calumnies would 'purge away impurities,' and this they did, for public stupidity had forced the Ministers to declare his position in definite terms. 'I may say with pride, that not the veriest tittle of a reproach can be brought against me *with truth*,' he wrote. He had the satisfaction of a new and complete understanding, following the vicious attacks of public and press. Disraeli emerged from the fog to declare his admiration of the Prince. 'The opportunity which office has afforded me of becoming acquainted with the Prince filled me with a sentiment towards him which I may describe without exaggeration as one of affection,' he wrote, in a private letter³¹⁷ to a friend.

There was to come a day when even Palmerston discarded his prejudice. He later spoke of Albert as a man 'far greater and more extraordinary' than the Emperor of the French. It was not until he became Prime Minister that he made this acknowledgment. Until then, he 'had no idea of his possessing such eminent qualities,' or of 'how fortunate' it was 'for the country that the Queen married such a Prince.'

But Albert had to go through mental hell and terrible loneliness before this appreciation came to him; before the Queen could write, upon the anniversary of their wedding day, that their years together were 'happy and blessed.' 'Trials we must have; but what are they if we are together,' she wrote.

•

Chapter Twenty-nine

§ I — 1854

PALMERSTON CAME back into office. The threat of war, the complications with Russia and France and Turkey were too frightening now for any conflict at home to assume more than minor importance. Albert had been delighted by the debate in Parliament. It had cleared his name and it had thrown 'all the stupid accusations' against him 'to the winds.'³¹⁸ 'We are all well,' he wrote. 'We skate a great deal and this gives the children especially great pleasure. They are now studying a French comedy which is to be performed in a few days.'

Very often the Princes and Princesses acted little plays for their mother and father. On the anniversary of their wedding day, as a complete surprise, the children gave a representation of the Four Seasons. Baroness Bunsen described the innocent and pretty spectacle, Princess Alice as Spring 'scattering flowers and reciting verses,' speaking with a tone of voice 'like the Queen.' Then appeared the Princess Royal 'as Summer, with Prince Arthur stretched upon the sheaves as if tired with the heat and harvest-work.' Prince Alfred was crowned with vine leaves and he wore the skin of a panther. Then came the Prince of Wales, against a bitter winter scene covered with icicles and with Princess Louise at hand, muffled and charming, 'busy keeping up a fire.' Then all the Seasons gathered upon the stage, with Princess Helena, veiled in white, holding a long cross and pronouncing a blessing upon her parents.

When it was all over, the nurse brought in the baby, Prince Leopold. He looked at them with his 'big eyes, stretching out his arms to be taken' by the Prince.

§ II — 1854

ALBERT WORKED on, shocked by the state of Europe,

watching the Crimean war coming nearer and nearer. He did not allow his German blood to disturb his sense of justice. 'I don't like to write about Germany,' he said in a letter to his brother. '... involuntarily I make a fist and this prevents me from writing.'

'For Germany . . . there can be no better combination in this heavy crisis than a close alliance between France and us. Prussia's behaviour is wrong. Neutrality is absurd. . . . Saying Prussia is not interested in the question is stupid. Prussia is much more interested in the question than France or England. For Germany it is a question of life, whereas for us, only of a secondary nature. . . . Our preparations for the war are progressing twice as fast as the French. The fleet will be exceedingly fine, perhaps a little too strong for the shallow sea. The 25,000 men for Constantinople are organised, 10,000 of them have already arrived at Malta, the artillery has left and the cavalry is to go through France, and, at the wish of the Emperor, to march through Paris! Who would have thought a year ago that such things might happen!'

This letter was written on March 23rd. On April 3rd, he wrote again. 'I hope you found our declaration of war dignified. We are very benevolent towards the neutrals in our declarations.'

The Emperor of Russia had apparently threatened to publish Albert's letters to him, but the Prince was not afraid. 'My correspondence with him refers only to the announcements of the births of our children, so they would be as uninteresting as they are innocent.' To Stockmar he wrote: 'Our finances are so flourishing, that we expect to carry on the war without borrowing a shilling, doubling the Income Tax in case of need. . . . The public is as eager for war as ever.'

War was declared. The streets of London were lively with the marching of soldiers and the sound of trumpets. Above them all stood the Queen, a little flushed by the fear and the glory of ruling a country at war. She became dignified and

benevolent. She got up early in the morning and went out on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to see the Scots Fusiliers march past. Little and magnificent, with tears in her eyes, she watched her soldiers. As they marched past, they could see her. The sun was shining over the towers of Westminster Abbey. This was *Her* London; these were *Her* soldiers. In a time like this the people forgot the politicians. In the grip of a great emotion, Londoners always came to the gates of *Her* palace. The soldiers were going to defend *Her* and they went with *Her* picture in their pockets. Prince Albert stood by her, less magnificent, less able to express his feelings.

It was not enough that she should bid farewell to her soldiers. She went to the coast to speed her navy on its terrible mission. She watched from the deck of her own little ship until long after the fleet had melted into the distance in which its adventure lay. Albert stood beside her, conscientious, stiff and still, while her white handkerchief waved and waved, until it fell to her side in a trembling hand.

§ III — 1855

THE LONG, weary story of the Crimea is told in many books: The archives of the Government offices and those of Windsor contain overwhelming proof of the part that Prince Albert played. The public accusation that he had sympathy for Russia is all the more absurd, and the scene at the Tower all the more shameful, when we read of Albert's confidence that 'all Europe' wished to see Russia 'defeated and chastised.' The Prince wrote a letter to his stepmother, whose sympathies were with the enemy. 'I can . . . forgive your heart for being Russian. . . . Mine is exactly the reverse.' From the day when the war began, he read every dispatch, he knew 'to a man the strength of both forces,' he watched every move and he studied the charts of the country; his

knowledge was so sound that his reports and suggestions were beyond the criticism of even the oldest campaigners. He studied the maps of the territory upon which the soldiers were to fight and he drew up plans for the invasion of the Crimea.

Under his hand, fifty volumes of memoranda grew. He seemed to rise to even greater heights of efficiency and cold reason, under the strain and excitement of the war. But there was a high wall between Albert's efficiency and the machinery of war. He saw Ministers and Generals make mistake after mistake. 'We have much trouble with the Ministry,' he wrote to Ernst. 'Aberdeen still lives in 1814, Lord John in 1830, Palmerston in 1848. Parliament and the Press have suddenly become born generals. . . . The war will not be ended quickly if the Germans do not take part. . . . Could we only take Sebastopol!'

Many other names were to be added to the Crimean story before Sebastopol. Alma, Balaclava, and Inkermann worked their havoc on the army—the weary months moved on and during the winter, the suffering of the troops was terrible. Albert's early warning about the bedraggled strength of the army had been justified, but the warning had also been too late. He worked day and night at his desk, suggestion after suggestion was put into cold memoranda and sent to the Ministers and Generals. He tired them with his energy; he was like an incessant hammer. He urged Aberdeen to form a foreign legion and he pleaded for the completing of the militia by ballot. At first, the Cabinet demurred, but, in the end, every suggestion was adopted. Just as Aldershot grew out of his idea for a permanent encampment, so his schemes for strengthening and improving the army were to be tried and proved. 'The army must be increased,' he wrote. Then he wrote it again and again, spurring the Ministers on and pointing to the horrible wreckage brought on by malaria. The dismal story moved on through mismanagement and sickness, with occasional victories to stimulate the

tired zeal of the troops. Despair was threatening. Dying men were raving in the beds of Koulalee, mumbling: 'Sebastopol—has it fallen—would that I had been in at the last.'

But the Russian Emperor had written: 'Sebastopol will never be taken.' The Russians were confident and before this confidence, Albert and Palmerston met and at last found themselves concerned in a common desire. Their violent eagerness to strengthen the army and humiliate Russia was drawing them closer together. In February of 1855, the sophisticated old statesman whom they thought too old to be useful and only clever enough to be dangerous, came to Buckingham Palace to kiss the Queen's hand as her Prime Minister. Palmerston was as zealous as Albert in his desire to fight the war magnificently, for none but a terrible and final victory. But there were frightening anxieties almost on the day when he came into power. One of the first things he did was to write a personal letter to the Emperor of the French. This action excited Prince Albert to a memorandum. The letter had caused them 'great uneasiness.' He thought this 'sort of private correspondence' between Palmerston and Napoleon 'a novel and unconstitutional practice.'³¹⁹

Events were moving too quickly—the fears for the Crimea were too dramatic to allow time for any small agitations at home. In March, the Emperor Nicholas of Russia died. Again the soldiers raised themselves in their beds at Koulalee, to cry 'Nicholas is dead. . . . Thank God. . . . All blessings be with you for bringing us such blessed news. . . . If he died by poison we should have peace. . . . He has been the death of thousands.'³²⁰

§ IV — 1855

ONE OF the bogies reawakened by the war was that of Anglo-French friendship. Again the two countries, so

fundamentally opposed by instinct, were drawn into a conflict in which a common danger obliged them to be friends. To set a seal upon the friendship, Louis Napoleon came to England. The golden state rooms of Windsor were opened for him; he slept in the room where his enemy, the Russian Emperor, had slept and where, only a few years before, the wretched Louis Philippe had rested. He drove through an excited London. Windows, pavements and housetops were crowded, the bands played and England felt safe and happy. The mud and the blood of the Crimea were forgotten for a moment. The Queen sat next to the Emperor at dinner and she listened to his voice, 'low and soft,' telling her that he had seen her eighteen years before, a smiling girl, driving through the London streets. She found him civil, amiable and well bred in his manners. They left the Castle after breakfast, to walk in the park. The Queen was silent. She was contented to listen to the Emperor and Albert, discussing the plans of the war, the anxieties and the hopes. There was a 'beautiful and exciting' review of the troops in the Park. The Long Walk was crowded and the Emperor, riding across the field 'on a very fiery, beautiful chestnut,' joined Albert and rode down the line.

The Prince had already met the Emperor when he went to Boulogne in 1854. Albert had thought him gayer than he expected, not so pale or so old. They had driven together along the 'detestable' roads, they had talked and they had reviewed thousands of soldiers. Day by day, the Emperor had thawed towards Albert, and the Prince had returned to England, to set down in a cold memorandum, an impression of the Emperor. He thought him 'quiet and indolent from constitution, not easily excited, but gay and humorous when at his ease.' He thought the Emperor's education 'very deficient, even on subjects which are of the first necessity to him.' But Louis Napoleon was modest about his own deficiencies and willing to admit them.

Now they met in the more confident and secure atmosphere of Albert's home. The Queen danced in a quadrille with the Emperor, in the Waterloo Chamber. The terrible Napoleon's nephew was now her 'nearest and most intimate ally.'

The Queen wished to be pleased. She thought the Empress 'gentle and graceful and modest'—all saintly virtues were discovered in her. One morning, there was a council of war, but it was in the afternoon, when Albert walked in the park with the Emperor, that they talked more intimately. Albert was clever in planning his conversations with the Emperor. Talking was all very well, but he liked to see a man's opinions written, signed and sealed. So when they returned to the Castle, Albert set down the gist of their conversation in a memorandum which was sent off to Palmerston.

The Queen gave Louis Napoleon the coveted Garter. They talked of the wretched dangers of being a Sovereign, of fanatics in the streets, with pistols, of the risks which beset them at every turn. In London, the initials of the four Royalties had been illuminated in the streets. 'N.E., V.A.' The Emperor had turned to the Queen and shown her that they spelled Neva.

In Coburg, Stockmar read about the glorious reception with grim common sense. There was one thing certain, he said. The splendour of England's reception would 'for his whole life, prevent [Louis Napoleon] from sinning against England.'³²¹

The Emperor went back to France and Albert turned again to his memoranda. When the Ministers came to Buckingham Palace—Gladstone, Granville, Palmerston himself—it was with Prince Albert that they conferred. He was the voice of the Crown. In his memoranda he set down the record of their conversations and from these, he framed reports which went out as hints to the War Office. The Queen questioned him no longer and the Ministers questioned him less. He disarmed all argument by being punctiliously accurate.

Chapter Thirty

§ I — 1855

THE WOUNDED were coming home. Albert worked all day, planning campaigns and stimulating Government energy; the Queen bent over her schemes for hospitals and nurses. She visited the mutilated men in the hospitals. Among them was one she had seen from her balcony when the Scots Fusiliers went away. She found him lying on the bed, shot through the cheek.

She enquired into every plan for the happiness of the wounded; she was anxious when she saw that the windows in their rooms were so high that when they turned upon the pillows, they could not see the English spring. She remonstrated because the sick men at Chatham were obliged to eat and sleep in the same room, and she could not bear the idea of the soldiers being put in hulks. 'A hulk is a very gloomy place, and these poor men require their spirits to be cheered.' She talked of her 'dear, brave, noble heroes'—she called them her children and her especial charge. She meant what she said, with a naive and simple sincerity. When the wounded soldiers passed before the Queen, nothing would satisfy her but that she should present them with their medals herself. 'Will the medals now be soon ready?' she wrote anxiously. She wanted to present them *personally* and, she added, with astuteness, that such an act would no doubt have a very beneficial effect . . . on the recruiting.³²²

She presented the medals and was delighted afterwards when the soldiers refused to give them up to have their names inscribed upon them, 'for fear that they should not receive the identical ones put into their hands by me.'

§ II — 1855

IN AUGUST, the Queen and the Prince went to stay with the

Emperor in France. Their journey was brightened by news of the Russian defeat on the Tschernaja. The Prince wrote to Stockmar from St. Cloud. '... we are all well ... the Emperor in high spirits ... the nation flattered and friendly.' The carriages passed through the florescent streets of Paris, the people cried '*Vive la Reine d'Angleterre,*' and Victoria bowed and smiled, but a spectator saw that she was still more happy when they cried '*Vive le Prince Albert.*' The streets were in a blaze of light from lamps and torches; they passed to the Palace amidst the roar of cannon and the blare of bands.

They found that they could be frank with Louis Napoleon. The Queen begged him to speak out, if he had any complaint, or if he was annoyed, for, '... by doing so all misunderstandings and complications would be avoided.' This was a new delight to them both. Prince Albert and the Queen were naturally candid and they were not clever at subterfuge. They were happy to sit thus, talking to a man who was their equal, telling him frankly of the defects in his Generals and listening with equal sense, when he spoke 'very openly and frankly of the defects of *our* Generals.'

Even here, the Queen waited patiently upon Albert's words. 'May God ever bless and protect him for many, many years to come, and may we ever be together to our lives' end!' she wrote, on his birthday. They celebrated the day at St. Cloud, and among the presents she gave him were some pretty Crimean studs, with a blank upon one of the buttons. She hoped that the name of *Sebastopol* would be added. The Emperor had composed special music in honour of Albert's birthday, and on this sunny morning, the three of them stepped upon the balcony. Three hundred drummers were assembled in the courtyard to play a special roll in Albert's honour. Every barrier was broken down—they talked upon topics as dangerous as the Orleans family and their relations with the Queen.

'I should not fear saying anything to him,'³²³ wrote Victoria, and even Albert, who was 'naturally much calmer . . . much less taken by people,' admitted that it was extraordinary 'how very much attached one becomes to the Emperor.'³²⁴

When the Queen came back to England, she spoke of Louis Napoleon as her *personal friend*. Prince Albert said little or nothing. Lady Augusta Bruce wrote of him as saying 'less than he thinks and feels, invariably.' Lady Augusta was a little disturbed by Victoria's panegyric of the French people. She was anxious to believe all the Queen told her and she hoped that 'dear Louis Napoleon' would live up to the Queen's faith in him, and end 'by putting a little sense' into the French people.

§ III — 1855

THE COURT went to Balmoral. The exciting new Castle was finished. The grand turrets were complete, and within, the carpets of Royal Stuart Tartan and Green Hunting Stuart were spread. The curtains were of Royal Stuart Tartan, lined with red and the chairs and sofas in the drawing-room were dress Stuart poplin. Lady Augusta had gone to Scotland with the Duchess of Kent and she described the furniture thus, adding: 'All highly characteristic and appropriate, but not equally *flatteux* to the eye.'³²⁵

The big affairs of the world gave place to small domestic pictures. There was a little storm when the Princess of Prussia wrote to ask the Queen if it was true that the French friendship had caused the English officers to efface *Waterloo* from their clasps and medals. 'Most certainly not,' answered the Queen. ' . . . it is there and there it will remain and we hope ere long Sebastopol may be added.' In Scotland the big storms of Europe were not as important as the little storms of the nursery. One day, Leopold was naughty, and

the Queen suggested that it might be well to whip him. The Duchess of Kent pleaded for him and said that it made her very sad to hear a child cry. 'Not when you have eight, Mama—that wears off,' said the Queen. 'You could not go through that each time one of the eight cried!'³²⁶

§ IV — 1855

ONE OF 'the eight' was growing towards womanhood. Princess Victoria was turned sixteen. She was attractive but more than this, she had a well-ordered intelligence. The cloak of painstaking learning which Stockmar had given to Prince Albert was handed on to her. As early as 1844, she had proved her composure and royal manner. Little more than a baby, she had walked up a staircase for a reception in Dundee, with the people cheering all around her, 'not put out, nor frightened, nor nervous.'³²⁷ When they came to the little Inn at Dunkeld, she had stood up, a pretty flower of a child, and bowed to the people out of the window, without any prompting from her parents.

In the years between this self-confident appearance in Dundee and the summer at Balmoral, she had learned everything her father could teach her, with obedience and ease. She was quicker in learning than her brother. *She* would never be found, in later years, bored by the tombs of Egypt and sitting at the foot of a Pyramid, reading 'East Lynne'³²⁸ She was serious, faintly precocious, and so intelligent that she was able to help her father at his work; an obedient and pliable secretary, understanding the Prince's conscientious methods. She gave none of the anxieties of her brother; her parents were wholly pleased with her.

§ V — 1855

IN 1851, when the Exhibition was opened in Hyde Park,

among the royal princes who had come to do honour to Prince Albert had been Prince Frederick William of Prussia. He was tall and broad, serious in manner and painstaking enough to impress himself upon Prince Albert. He came to stay with the Court again in the summer of 1856.

Princess Victoria was still only sixteen, not yet confirmed, shy, but happy from the delight of her recent journey to Paris. Prince Frederick fitted into the simple life of Balmoral. He joined the family in their rides over the hills, and after a few days, he begged the Queen and the Prince to permit him to court Princess Victoria. The Queen was nervous . . . her child was so young, but her fear melted before the ardour of the boy.

One afternoon, when they were riding up Craig-na-Ban, the Prince spurred his horse forward in the narrow track until he was riding beside the Princess. They paused and he leaned over to pick her a sprig of white heather. He placed it in her hand and on the way home, he told her that he loved her.

'The marriage cannot be thought of until she is seventeen,' Prince Albert wrote to his brother in Coburg. ' . . . it is to be kept *strictly secret*. Of course all the world will talk about it, but as long as we ourselves say nothing, it will not matter.'³²⁹

Some months afterwards he wrote: 'The intended is more and more in love every day. Victoria is quite impatient about it, for she cannot imagine that the child can arouse such feelings. Vicky is very reasonable, she will go well prepared into the labyrinth of Berlin.'³³⁰

§ VI — 1855

THERE WAS another relief from the long strain of the war. On September 13th the Prince rejoiced over the fall of Sebastopol. The Court was still at Balmoral. Out on the

hill, a wood pile had been waiting for a year—waiting for the great day on which Prince Albert was to light it and send the glad news of Sebastopol over the countryside. The Queen watched the blaze from the house: she could see the Prince outlined against the flames. The scattered population came up from the valley and danced about him. For a moment, Albert dismissed anxiety; he joined with the excited Scotsmen and danced, 'a veritable Witch's dance, supported by whisky.'³⁸¹

§ VII — 1855

THIS NEW victory was not to settle the Crimea. The Russians still clung tenaciously to the north side of Sebastopol and they were able to hold the allies back. There was no cooling of England's eagerness to pursue the war; and the dockyards and arsenals of the country were still strengthening the fleet. But there was public dissatisfaction with the apparently slow work of the soldiers. New Generals were wanted, and when General Simpson resigned, through a sense of his own deficiency, no two people seemed able to agree as to who should be made Commander-in-Chief. Again the Prince and Palmerston were able to work together. 'To find any officer against whom nothing can be said implies the choice of either of such men as Wellington or Napoleon, or of men who have never been employed at all; and that of itself would be an absolute disqualification,'³⁸² wrote Palmerston. So Albert turned away from his daughter's betrothal and the ashes of the triumphal bonfire, to devise a new plan which would solve the Prime Minister's difficulty. He wished to divide the army into two Army Corps, each under the command of a senior officer of high position, and subject to the general control of the Commander-in-Chief. He elaborated the scheme into a form to be placed before the Cabinet.

Within a few days his suggestions were adopted, and Palmerston wrote: 'I and all the other members of the Cabinet feel greatly obliged to Your Royal Highness for having suggested an arrangement which had not occurred to any of us.'

'I have not yet shot anything. . . . In three weeks I did not shoot more than one and a half stags,' Albert wrote to Ernst. Even here in the Highlands, he was pursued by the ogre of duty, which threatened to destroy him. When he had worked out the scheme for the reorganisation in the Crimea, he wrote a Memoir on the Examinations and Rules of Admission to Diplomacy, and then, an address on the Influence of Science and Art on Manufactures. At night, he sat with Princess Victoria, preparing her for her married life in Berlin. He believed in vocational training—that a child's education should begin on the line of its future career. He saw the dangers in the English public school system which moulded a boy's character without ever showing him how to apply his character to his career. So it was that while *The Times* abused him with an article '*scandalous* in itself and *degrading* to the country,' charging him with having given his daughter to a 'paltry German dynasty,' he sat up every night with her for an hour, teaching her history, setting her subjects for essays. When he went to bed, he was always tired, but satisfied because his daughter's intellect was 'quick and thoroughly sound in operation.' Education was an obsession with him now. Like an evangelist of learning, he came to look upon all about him as children to be educated and improved. If only *The Times* would not pester and belittle him! Albert deplored its 'lies' to Ernst, but added that in the long run, they were neutralised because they lied in both directions.³³³

The schoolmaster was not satisfied with only his daughter's education. The betrothal had given him a new object for his lectures. Now he might become a power for good in

Prussian affairs, so he wrote long letters to 'dear Fritz,' talking of the state of Prussia and, going back into the cobwebs of his own childhood, he recaptured and repeated the phrase: 'My son, you will be surprised, with how little wisdom the world is governed.' He explained 'essential principles' to the boy and told him about his betrothed, how she came to him every evening from six to seven, so that he could put her through a 'general catechising . . . in order to give precision to her ideas. . . . She is now engaged in writing a short compendium of Roman history. . . .' He talked of the Crimea and of the preparations for winter, of the spring, when there would be fifty thousand Englishmen to force the Russians back. The year closed, and late in November Albert wrote again to Ernst, pleased because England was 'thoroughly sound, in spite of the street boy character of the Press.' But politics were 'boiling . . . as if an outbreak of Vesuvius might be expected.'

Such were the letters he wrote and such were his public statements. But in his private diary he wrote: 'I have endured frightful torture. . . . I continue to suffer terribly.' Rheumatism was creeping over his body and crippling him. The steady flame of duty needed more fuel than he had to spare, and 1855 closed with the first sign that he was being exhausted by his own ardour and anxiety.

Chapter Thirty-one

§ 1 — 1856

UP to this time, Prince Albert had always seemed to be phlegmatic. Sometimes he would change from his complacency, to depression or to faint despair, but he was seldom moved to unbridled anger. The one English institution which was capable of making him indignant was the Press. The journalists had always fed ravenously upon him as material for slander and ribaldry. Occasionally there had been a paragraph, or an isolated cartoon in which a mild journalist had sought to do him justice. But more often, the hard working Prince of what one vulgar fellow called the 'Cobugs,' was giped at by Fleet Street for everything he did. '... soon there will not be room enough in the same country for the Monarchy and *The Times*,' Albert wrote to his brother, just before the Crimea peace was signed. 'The first wishes to do good, the latter is satisfied with doing mischief.' But he drew a shred of happiness from the fact that the nation remained sound and progressive. 'The people bear the sacrifices of the war without grumbling, they love their Queen and adore her, her army and her navy. ...'³³⁴

He cared little for his unpopularity, so long as he saw that his efforts exalted the Crown before the eyes of the people. Even Greville, who was inclined to curl his tongue around a scandal with pleasure, thought the papers were behaving infamously to the Prince. '... not a day passes without some furious article, and very often five or six articles and letters, all in the same strain.'³³⁵ He deplored the impertinence and insolence of the journalists and contributed to the suspicion that, in the previous year, Palmerston had been urging the newspapers on in their attacks.

§ II — 1856

EARLY IN the New Year, the Queen was considering drawings for the Victoria Cross. The war was moving towards its end, peace was in view, and the Queen wished to decorate her soldiers. She turned the drawings over in her hands. She marked the one she preferred with an 'X.' and asked that the words *For the Brave* should be removed and *For Valour* put in their place. The first might lead her people to suppose that only those who received the coveted decoration were brave, and that the mass of her army was less courageous.

The Queen was thrilled by the stories of Florence Nightingale, walking down the long arcades of Scutari, the dying men sitting up to catch the sound of her footstep or the flutter of her dress. For many years, British women had merely waited in their houses, while their men went out to battle. Theirs had been the useless and anxious mission of watching. Now the Queen's own sex was rising above its helplessness. Politics drowned the clatter of tea cups. *The Times* was read in the boudoir as well as in the smoking-room. Women had even gone out to the very burning edge of war. The Queen was somehow identified with this glorious emancipation; the futility of the life lived by women was passing in an age when a woman sat upon the throne.

In April, peace was signed, and in this moment, Albert wrote to his brother, *satisfied* with the terms. ' . . . our allies would certainly not have continued the war and we could not have followed them to the Rhine. They have about 40,000 men in hospitals and they lose 250 every day. Our patients number from four to five per cent. The French come begging to our camps, where there is plenty. This does not appear in the newspapers, but exactly for this reason, it is true.'³⁸⁸

England was caught up in the new excitement of peace.

Crippled men were covered with honours so that their maimed bodies seemed to be beautiful, in the curious ecstasy which follows a war. Tired and pale, Florence Nightingale paused in the hospital at Scutari to open a little parcel. In it was a brooch from the Queen, with a note which talked of her 'blessed work' and the 'bright example' she had set for their sex.

Two miles of ships were aligned for a review at Spithead; the Queen went to Aldershot where fourteen thousand men were drawn up on the plain. She rode past them on a chestnut charger. Helmets and bearskins and shakos were flung to the sky—the dragoons waved their glittering sabres in the sun. Aldershot rang and rang again with the cry 'God Save the Queen.'

Albert was near her, slightly overlooked in the jubilation. This very camp, which was to become the pulse of the British Army, had been his idea. He had seen the Crystal Palace rise from the calm lawns of Hyde Park to exalt industry; he had seen the bare earth of Aldershot grow into a hive of business and efficiency, according to a plan of his own making. He had seen the campaigns of the Crimea refreshed by his memoranda and he had seen the army and the navy strengthened through his foresight. He had come to England to contribute to Victoria's greatness, and in this moment of peace, when he was almost forgotten, there was not a line in his most private letters to show that he was resentful. He saw the Queen bestow the Garter upon Palmerston. He saw her write a letter to King Leopold, a letter radiant with praise for Clarendon. '*All*' was owing to Clarendon. He could not be too highly praised.

Russia was subdued, Turkey was protected from trickery and humiliation, temporary friendship was sealed with France. So, for a little time, Prince Albert and the Queen forgot everything that existed beyond the coastline of England. The Prince pledged himself to two definite duties—

the education of his children and the earnest care that England should never be found unready with its army and navy again.

§ III — 1856

THE PRINCE OF WALES was now fifteen years of age. His temper was quick, he told the little fibs of boyhood,³³⁷ and he learned slowly compared with the concentration of his older sister. Yet Greville thought of him as clever, with good manners, and while his parents watched him anxiously, imagining that he was in error because he was different from them, one of the ladies of the Court talked of his youthful simplicity and the freshness which gave his manner such charm.³³⁸ Another courtier wrote in his diary of the 'slender, fair boy, with a frank, open countenance.'³³⁹

While Prince Albert drowned his son beneath a deluge of memoranda, he had the satisfaction of seeing his daughter grow exactly as he wished. Her brain was in the image of his own. One night the American Minister sat next to her at dinner and observed that she was full of frolic and fun, but he added that she had 'an excellent head.' The truth was that she wore the cloak of Coburg education in complete comfort. For her, it *was* a cloak, donned with instinctive ease. For her brother, it was a strait-jacket. When the time came, Princess Victoria carried her father's ideas of liberalism and education with her to Prussia, and became an English rock in the Prussian sea. It is interesting to look beyond the horizon of this story for a moment and observe how far this was good for Prussia. In turn, when the Princess Royal became the mother of the pathetic little boy who was to become Emperor, she tried the Stockmar-Leopold-Albert plan upon him. The pleasure-loving nature of King Edward did not accept rigorous education with ease, nor did the German boy accept against his mother's discipline. In



The Royal Family. The Prince of Wales afloat in his New Boat on Virginia Water

Prince Edward, good-nature, and a sense of duty saved him from destruction. In the case of the German Prince, arrogance and vanity caused him to strut away from parental control. His parents saw in him the beginning of the unrestrained ambition which eventually brought Germany into despair and humiliation.

In the year 1856, Albert observed his daughter with sad pride. She had obeyed him. She had given him the quick intellectual companionship which was impossible from Queen Victoria. He could influence his wife only through her feelings; but he could guide his daughter by the cold, intellectual discussions which were his delight. So he loved her, perhaps, more than any other of his children.

Yet he was prepared to lose her. His sense of duty made it possible for him to sacrifice her, when still very young, so that Germany and England might be drawn more closely together. Of the child's feelings we know little. She went through her glorious marriage, with thirty-five royal Princes and Princesses to kiss her hand. When the wedding was over, Prince Albert went with the bride and the bridegroom to Gravesend. In the last moment before she left the Palace, the Princess had clung to her mother. 'I think it will kill me to take leave of dear Papa,' she had pleaded.

When they came to the river, snow was falling and they shivered on the wharf. The Princess went on board and disappeared. Her father waited, until the ship faded out of sight: he watched, until the last moment. But his daughter did not appear on deck again to wave to him.

The Prince went back to London, and, humorous as it seems, he wrote her memoranda. The first letter was almost sad. The old tenderness, which seemed to be almost dead by now, awakened. 'My heart was very full when yesterday you leaned your forehead on my breast to give free vent to your tears. I am not of a demonstrative nature,' he wrote. '... you can hardly know how dear you have always been to me. ...'

But a display of emotion would not help her. Perhaps it was amazing unselfishness and not merely hardness which made Albert hide his feelings. For it is true that if he had shown unbridled emotions, he would have failed to give the Queen the equilibrium which she lacked when she was young. The result would have been disastrous.³⁴⁰

Albert's daughter was secure, as far as he could see. Now he concentrated upon the charming, affectionate, but very difficult son, whose qualities appeared to him as nothing but limitations, since they were different from his own.

§ IV — 1856

THE RELATIONSHIP between a Sovereign and an heir is tantalising to any biographer. The sense of power in a Queen must always be a mystery, beyond ordinary understanding. She gives her son a heritage which is mysterious and terrible. Kings and Queens have seldom appreciated their heirs. Perhaps it is that the public responsibility is so awful for a Sovereign that love is hampered by criticism. Greville was frank enough, or extravagant enough, to say that Queen Victoria did not like her son. This was not true. Later history shows that with all her anxiety and public care for his future, there was an underlying affection which was unable to reconcile itself with her mental anxieties over him.

In 1856 we find Albert and his son strangely misunderstanding each other. It is curious to observe Prince Albert's lenient care for the poor, his anxiety for all who suffered injustice, and then to compare this with his inability to see that his son possessed qualities which were different but no less excellent than his own.

With his daughter safe and exalted in Prussia, Prince Albert studied every detail of his son's life. He found that his essays were 'bald, ungrammatical, and badly penned.' When he decided that the boy should have a small allowance,

the Queen accompanied the news with a memorandum. He must 'never wear anything *extravagant or slang*.' He was warned against '*foolish and worthless persons*.'

The young Prince was stunned under a deluge of serious books. 'I am for his reading a good novel, but would allow this to him as an indulgence,' wrote his father. The boy must not look upon the reading of a novel, even by Sir Walter Scott, as '*a day's work*.'

At the age of seventeen, the Prince of Wales was allowed his own establishment. The increased liberty was given with a letter, full of instructions. It was also an anxious letter. Perhaps they had been too hard and strict with him. Greville described the letter ³⁴¹as one of the most admirable ever penned. The young Prince's feelings were touched 'to the quick,' when he received his parents' letter. He took it to Gerald Wellesley³⁴² and showed it to him, 'in a flood of tears.' '... the effect it produced is a proof of the wisdom which dictated its composition,' added Greville.³⁴³

The parents had said that now they would not intrude any more advice upon him. Yet when he went to Oxford, their shadow came over him again. He must not smoke. He could be in the University, but not of it, for he was to live in his own house, with his own staff. He was to see irresponsible undergraduates enjoying their freedom, while he passed among them, like a shade which was not of their world.

§ v — 1856

PRINCE ALBERT'S family anxieties did not end with his daughter and his eldest son. It was now almost certain that his brother would not provide an heir for the Duchy of Coburg, so it fell upon Prince Albert to train one of his own sons to assume the Coburg crown. Here was an entirely new problem. Training a daughter to be consort for a Prussian King and a son to follow his Queen on the English

throne was different from preparing a boy to go to Coburg, to rule German people in a little community which flourished upon tradition and all the pretty but small concerns of a minute German Court. The choice fell upon Prince Alfred and on this matter, Prince Albert wrote to his brother several times during 1856 and 1857. Alfred was already living most of his time in the Royal Lodge at Windsor with an 'intelligent engineer tutor' who was preparing him for the navy.

Duke Ernst was anxious. His young nephew's taste for the navy made him afraid that he would not wish to give up his English life when the time came, and transplant his home, his interests and his affections to Germany. He was anxious also because he found that Prince Alfred did not show much interest in his Saxon ancestors and the story of his father's family. Indeed, it seemed to Ernst that the heir to his throne was being brought up as an Englishman who would never settle down to the miniature life of Coburg-Gotha.

Prince Alfred wanted nothing more than to be a sailor. His father wrote: '... this is a passion which we, as his parents, believe not to have the right to subdue. It is not right to deny the wishes of a young soul, but we do what we can. . . .'³⁴⁴ He was pleased with this tenacity in his second son. '... his love for the bluejackets has always turned up again, and always with greater force, and with the remarkable perseverance which this child possesses, it is not to be expected that he will give up the idea easily. An example of his perseverance is with his violin, which he learned to play secretly, in his free time, wishing to surprise us. . . .'

Albert had still another consideration. 'Bertie may die and Alfred would then be heir to the English throne.' If they made a German of him, it would be difficult for him and for his country. There were 'almost endless reasons why Alfred's education must not be for Coburg alone.'

In April of 1857, Prince Alfred went to Coburg and to Gotha. Some day he was to assume his uncle's crown, so it was well that he should try to know and understand the Duchy. Prince Albert watched his son's progress from afar. 'It seems strange that he is to see all those dear places and I am not with him.'

Prince Alfred arrived in Coburg in the Spring, the season when the town and country are pretty and bright, like a little paradise. He walked in the Rosenau garden, he stood at the window of the room in which his father was born, and he heard the deep-voiced river and the sprinkling of the fountain, to which Albert had listened when he was a child. He saw the Feste Coburg crowning the hill, far away, through a tunnel between the trees. He came back to England 'full of joy and freshness,' liking Coburg more than any other place he had seen during his journey.

Albert sighed a little over his own lost childhood, recalled by his son's adventure. 'All the plagues and serious business' of which every day brought him plenty, were necessary to bring him back to reality. His soul, he wrote, 'was lost in the dear memories.'

Chapter Thirty-two

§ 1 — 1856

THE STORY of a saint is exciting in so far as it is the story of triumph over sin and temptation, but the record of calm virtue, untainted by error, can make very dull reading.

The story of Christ has held the imagination and governed the actions of people through centuries, because He was a Man with the contacts, the temptations, and the muddled motives of every other man thrown into the experience of life. Had He been free of temptation, Christianity would have faded into tradition; the story of Bethlehem and Gethsemane would have lost its hold upon the world. In brief, any life story, be it that of a saint or a politician, a Prince or an actor, draws its excitement from light and shade, good and evil—godliness, stained by human weakness and error.

Without the colour of this indecision and change, the subject of a biography becomes difficult material in the writer's hands. The biographer may be spurred on, by his own zeal and affection, to interpret his man to the world. But he must pause now and then to review his work and see if he is justified in claiming the reader's attention.

It is in this year of the Prince's life that such a thought stirs in one. There comes a kind of fear of Prince Albert's virtue. Except that he misunderstood his son, and that his goodness sometimes appeared with the frown of the German schoolmaster, he seems to have been a perfect man. No cause came before him which he did not help or improve. '... from my heart I mean well towards all men,'³⁴⁵ he pleaded. It was true.

People who watched him and who wrote in secret and not for notoriety said that a high-minded action brought a serene light to his face. Sir Charles Phipps, who was Privy

Purse, said that the Prince's every word and every act were part of one great resolution to do what was *right*. A study of fifty books of the day and of every available letter and diary written about him in England and Germany, convinces one that this was unerringly true.

In the later story of his life, we seem to lack the light and shade which would make the narrative more exciting. There was some magic quality, a saintliness in him which leaves one barren of words. A native reserve and fear of superlatives makes one afraid of one's own delight over his character.

Of his inner sadness and his buried anxieties we know very little. We know that in this year, he showed the first signs that he was killing himself with work. He wrote in a letter to his stepmother: 'I get on pretty well, in spite of a weak stomach, with which I came into the world, and which I shall take with me to the grave.'³⁴⁶ The boy who had come from Coburg only sixteen years before, was bald and tired, pale and old. The Queen watched him and trembled. Once when he was ill he told her that he thought he would never have the strength to fight against death.

§ II — 1856

THE PRINCE continued to displease the aristocracy and irritate the newspapers, but he never failed to impress all who came into his presence with his disinterestedness. In 1857, when the Anglo-French friendship was threatened by Russia making overtures to France, it was Albert who wrote the long, brilliant letter³⁴⁷ to the Emperor, placing the English point of view before him. This was an opportunity which, three years before, Palmerston would have snatched greedily. Now, he said Albert's letter was 'most excellent' and, with Clarendon, he allowed and encouraged this usurpation of the Foreign Minister's rights.

When Louis Napoleon was at Osborne, in 1857, he went back to France refreshed by Albert's example. They had walked in the garden and Albert had guided him, corrected him and convinced him, as if he were a child. Coming near to Albert was like receiving some charm, some benediction, some strength to fight. 'One goes away from him . . . more disposed to do good,'³⁴⁸ wrote the Emperor. It is indeed difficult to judge within common standards, this lonely, cold man who, at the age of eighteen, sat beside the Pope and talked for half an hour about Etruscan art³⁴⁹ and who, risen to power and middle age, spent his evenings at Windsor in correcting the copybooks of his workmen from the park.

The Prince's philanthropy never remained in the realms of mere theory. When he was appointed Master of Trinity House, he became interested in the cause of the ballast-heavers. The story of their emancipation is best told in their own Memorial, written for the Queen after the Prince's death. 'Before he came to our rescue, we could only get work through a body of riverside publicans and middlemen, who made us drink before they would give us a job. . . . The consequence was that we were in a pitiable state; this truck-drinking system was ruining us body and soul, and our families too.

' . . . We got no help till we sent an appeal to your late Royal Consort. . . . He at once listened to us . . . he could put himself down from the throne he shared to the wretched home of us poor men. . . . He enquired himself into the evils that oppressed us. . . . At once our wrongs were redressed, and the system that had ruined us swept away.'

The ballast-heavers came to call him *Albert the Good* and though peers and journalists still enjoyed placing him in the pillory, there sprang up among middle class and poorer people a true love for his worth. These are the people who have no place in history; nor do they often become the

writers of history, so their tributes and feelings are lost in the shadows of the past.

§ III — 1856

By this time, Prince Albert was unable to relax from his desire to work. Even when he went to Balmoral, the early mornings and the hours after dinner found him at his desk. Work had become a mania in him. He looked wistfully out of the windows—the trees and the lawns would have been a delicious escape. Sometimes he went out and shot a stag, but he came back, with a feeling of guilt, to the fearful pile of plans and papers. There was no rest. He saw politicians rise and fall, but *he* remained in office perpetually. He saw his plans grow from ideas on paper to successes in practice: he moved from one problem to another, without respite.

England was already becoming complacent over the Crimean peace, self-satisfied, deluding herself that peace was an excuse for disarmament, for the scattering of her armies and the reducing of estimates for both services. Herein lay Prince Albert's new fear. He caused the Queen to write to Palmerston, complaining of the retrenchments and reminding him of the state of helplessness in which England was found when the storm of the Crimea broke over her. He did not want this to happen again. So Prince Albert persisted and worried the generals in their armchairs. 'I am constantly at work,' he wrote. His main duty at the moment was another memorandum of twenty-eight pages, urging the Ministers not to squander the good lessons of the war, not to allow the old dangers of unpreparedness to grow and perhaps destroy them.

He had one new and stimulating ally. When Florence Nightingale was back in England she went to Balmoral. The quiet figure had an astounding effect upon all the Court. She

walked in the garden, against the background of new granite walls and towers, 'modest, retiring and fearful of notice . . . a slight, delicate frame,' containing such 'depth of character and thought.'³⁵⁰

She seemed to strike awe into the ladies and gentlemen. Wearing a high black gown and a plain little morning cap, she sat beside the Queen, pleading for the soldiers, telling her of this wretched man and that poignant scene in the wards of Scutari. She told them that the Scottish soldiers bore pain best, then the English, and last of all, 'poor Paddy.'³⁵¹ There was one armless soldier who had become the Queen's own charge. The poor fellow had friends who helped him to the brandy bottle. Prince Albert thought him incorrigible, but the Queen insisted—she would never give him up. Miss Nightingale smiled her thanks.

A power of sense was contained in the modest, frail body. When she talked alone with Albert, Miss Nightingale told him stark truths about the army, about the hospitals, and about the miserable defects of the organisation as she found it in the East.

The Prince used her knowledge and swelled his memoranda; he had the satisfaction of seeing his suggestions adopted. One improvement he urged was in the standard of education in the army. He helped to cleanse the system of promotion and the buying of commissions and an almost immediate brightening of conditions followed his endeavours.

§ IV — 1857

TWO CHANGES in this year held the mirror up to Albert. He was seen as an older man, with his work in England coming to an end. Baron Stockmar emerged once more from his quiet life in Coburg. He was seventy, 'no longer equal, mentally or physically,' to serve Albert. The vast and energetic machine had become an old, tired man. 'I must say

good-bye, and this time for ever,' he wrote,³⁵² when he went away. He returned to Coburg and faded among the courtiers of the little town, watching the progress of his pupil with diminishing alertness. The pupil continued to write to him. But the east winds of Windsor weakened Albert's spirit. His cough had 'not been got rid of.' Yet there were little compensations to lighten his growing pessimism. When he had come to England, Parliament had been impertinent about his annuity, but when his daughter was married, they rose generously to the occasion. By a majority of three hundred and twenty-eight to fourteen, the House presented her with a dowry greater than what he had received as his annuity. It was Mr. Disraeli who dressed the occasion with elegant phrase, when he said that the appeal was one which all were ready to welcome 'with sympathy and respectful affection.'³⁵³

The other change came when the Queen chose to call Albert *Prince Consort*. England had been niggardly towards Albert from the beginning, so she decided to ignore Parliament this time and bestow the title upon him herself. Again *The Times* sneered at him. Again there was a flutter of discontent. Albert's own feelings were carried to his brother in a letter written from Balmoral on September 29th. His dispassionate and impersonal view of the honour shows us all the more the true unselfishness of his motives and plans. He wrote of the title as a topic 'I never liked to let you know through the post. . . . I am to have the title *Prince Consort of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*. This ought to have been done, as you thought yourself, at our wedding, but you also know in what state affairs were here at the time. The Tories cut off my apanage in the House of Commons and my Parliamentary rank in the House of Lords; the Royal Family were against the new-comer.'

A curious fear had made the Queen and the Prince anxious. As a foreign Prince, Albert had no defined position in

England. He wrote to his brother³⁵⁴ of their fear that 'wicked people' might urge the Prince of Wales to remonstrate, when he grew older, that he was a Prince of the country and that therefore, his father, who was a foreign Prince, should not take a place before him. It was a curious fear and it was primarily responsible for the Queen's seemingly high-handed action. At last he could go to Germany as an English Prince, but the honour came too late to mean anything to him. He made no comment in his letter. He was at Balmoral, and he had been out stalking. He talked of five stags lying before the house, shown in the torchlight, and then he talked of India. His fears about the army were justified. 'India is giving us much trouble,' he wrote. '... it is impossible to speak of the horrors which happen there.'

§ V — 1857-58

AGAIN THE army was unprepared for war; Prince Albert's warnings had been but half heeded. 'If we had not reduced in such a hurry this spring, we should now have all the men wanted,' wrote the Queen.³⁵⁵ Stories of the horrors of the Mutiny came from India, shocking the Queen and the country. The British troops arrived in sorry dribblets to suppress the massacre and torture which were bringing despair to the unhappy land.

Again Albert stirred the Ministers. The Queen's letters show how persistent she was, with the Prince beside her; how she deplored the slow recruiting, the fact that the country was undefended, with all its soldiers overseas. '... We are utterly defenceless,' wrote Clarendon, in gloom.

But if the Prince Consort was aggravated by the slow-footed parliamentarians, he had a steady faith in English character. Stockmar had comforted him by saying that the English surpassed all others in Europe in energy and 'vigour of character,' so the Prince persisted, and, while the ghastly

story of India moved on to Cawnpore and Nana Sahib's infamy, the statesmen were gradually forced to rise to action.

The Court went to Balmoral with the satisfying news that the Home Government was to raise fifteen, instead of ten, battalions and that the militia was to be called out to the number of fifteen thousand instead of ten thousand.

At Balmoral, with steady dismal rain falling on the beeches outside, day after day, the Queen and the Prince bent over their maps of India. Every new wisp of news made them study the ground from which the telegram came.

One thousand Europeans were besieged, hungry and in terror, within the walls of Lucknow. Almost a quarter of a million Indian troops had risen against twenty-four thousand British who, in addition to defending themselves, had also to continue to govern the two hundred millions of people in India.

It was not until the New Year that better news came from India. Lucknow was relieved and the beleaguered city blessed Colin Campbell's name. The Queen seemed to flourish, to grow to new heights upon the success of her soldiers. She congratulated, she showed her anxiety and humanity with royal munificence. She urged kindness for the 'brown skins' of India . . . she pinned medals upon the breasts of her heroes with trembling, proud hands.

Albert turned to contemplate the issues morosely and in gloom. England was passing through a bad season. Artisans were being turned into the streets from the closing factories; banks and companies were bankrupt. But as the year went on, India became more peaceful and the British business men recovered from their panic. But this did not lift the Prince's depression. Disraeli had said that he thought him to be the best educated man he had ever met. Dr. Stanley³⁵⁶ saw in him 'a steady support to all that was most excellent' in the Church. The Queen reflected in January that Albert had raised monarchy to the *highest* pinnacle of respect. But, in

the deep shadows of his room, Albert drew no solace from these compliments. He wrote to Stockmar: 'I never remember to have had so much to do as I have had lately.' He wrote to the Duchess of Kent: 'Our Ministers use fine phrases, but they do nothing. My blood boils within me.'

Chapter Thirty-three

§ 1 — 1858

NEW DUTIES pressed in upon the Prince and he neglected none of them. An attack upon the life of Louis Napoleon, by conspirators who had hatched their plot in England, was the first anxiety in the New Year. The French were indignant and some of his officers urged Napoleon to invade England, because, they said, it harboured assassins. So the pretty gestures of friendship were as naught for a month or two. The Conspiracy Bill came before the House of Commons and the complications it engendered obliged Palmerston to resign. The Prince and the Queen did not know whether to be glad or sorry. He had never gained the Queen's confidence, even when he pleased her. She could never forget his conduct to her 'angel' on certain occasions. Lord Derby was asked to form a Government, much against his will. Under the new order Albert was more depressed than ever. He complained to his brother, of a 'Tory ministry, with a radical programme, carrying out republican measures with a conservative majority, against liberal opposition.'³⁵⁷ As he said, such a state presented grave difficulties for a constitutional monarch. The feverish feeling in France reacted upon London. While the two Courts exchanged anxious letters, assuring each other of friendship, twenty thousand people gathered in Hyde Park and cried: 'Down with the French.' The English point of view was put into italics when an English jury acquitted Bernard, who had been concerned in the attempt upon the life of Louis Napoleon. The Prince's walks with the Emperor in the garden at Osborne, his patience, his guarded talks when they were in Paris, seemed to have no power when the feelings of the multitude were aroused. But Louis Napoleon persisted in his friendliness. Albert sighed, complained of feeling far from well, and turned to

the new Bill for the Government of India. Again the maps came out. With the Queen, he went through the Bill, made several suggestions, and had the mild satisfaction of hearing from the Ministers that all except one of them had been adopted. Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Queen, pleased over 'the Prince Consort's valuable and constitutional suggestions.'

Albert sighed again and turned to contemplate his son. The Prince of Wales had been confirmed, acquitting himself 'extremely well.' His father hoped the sacred day would make an abiding impression upon his mind. But he ran no risks. When the London season opened, he decided that it would be better to keep the boy away from England. '... as long as he is neither fish nor flesh ... it would not be good for him.'³⁸⁸

§ II — 1858

ALBERT'S GREAT joy was to think of his daughter in Berlin. He imagined her at Sans Souci, pouring out English tea in the sunshine; he imagined her walking in the Potsdam gardens, letting her liberal English ideas fall upon the ears of whoever walked beside her. Berlin had greeted her kindly, although her old-fashioned, plum-coloured silk dress and her ruddy complexion gave some of them an impression of reliability rather than fashion. But her eyes enchanted everybody. They were 'green like the sea on a sunny day.'

Albert wrote her long letters. He knew now that she had meant more to him than he had realised during the years when she was growing up beside him. His letters were full of politics, ideas and metaphysics. But sometimes he relaxed and talked to her of other things—of home-sickness. He understood her feelings, when she came to the uncomfortable Prussian castle, where life was crude and shorn of the

elegance she had been used to. She still called England 'home'; she was desolate. She cried when she heard Ernst's voice in one of the passages, because it was like Albert's voice.

This talk of home-sickness awakened the old picture of the Rosenau in Albert's mind. Thirteen years had passed since he had been there. He tried to recapture the spontaneous happiness of his youth and, in May, he went to Coburg and to the Rosenau. He walked in the gardens of his childhood, but his own ghost had fled and the hand that picked pansies in the garden, placing them tenderly in a box for Victoria, was fat and middle-aged and the eyes which looked through the tunnel of trees, to the rosy fortress on the hill, were tired. Over the fields between, where, as a boy, with white butterflies fluttering about him, he had watched the harvesters at work, the apples ripening on the trees, and the chicory flowers, like blue stars in the yellow grass, he saw now a vision of papers and memoranda.

There was something horrible about his return to Coburg. Stockmar was waiting for him, an old man, still shrewd and full of advice. Others had forgotten Albert: a new generation had arisen. He turned to the shells and birds he had collected as a child. He looked at them, he touched them with his heavy fingers, and he enjoyed the memories of finding them. 'I have eaten nothing all day,' he wrote to the Queen, who was still in England.

He went to the Rosenau again and walked from room to room. The holes his rapier had made in the wallpaper were still there. He gathered some cowslips in the fields and sent them to Victoria. 'Make tea of them, in honour of me, and let Bertie have some,' he wrote.

He sat up in Coburg late at night. He had to write more and more letters. The fever was upon him. Even here, he could not forget Westminster and Palmerston and Derby and state-affairs. He heard the watchman's horn from

the church tower, he heard the high bell and the low bell strike the hours. Still he wrote. Depression had conquered him in some terrible way. He could no longer believe in happiness; he could no longer look upon the Coburg scene as anything but the background of his own sadness.

'I have become an utter stranger here,' he complained to the Queen. He admitted his depression in his letters. His own memory had disappointed him and his own childhood had crumbled away. He came back to England a disappointed man.

§ III — 1860

THE PRINCE went to Coburg once more. The Queen was with him, to recall his old ecstasies. She made him look at the red roofs of the little town, the market place, the peasants working in the fields. But he was strangely unresponsive. When they went to the Rosenau he did not even go inside. He walked around the little castle; he went, with the Queen, into the marble hall which opened into the garden. But he did not explore the honeycomb of small rooms, his own nursery, or the room where he was born . . . he drove back to Coburg. There he went to see the sarcophagus of his mother. It was in the new and ornate Italian mausoleum, but the coffin had not yet been placed there. The story of her exile was known to him now.

There was one terrible moment in these days. Prince Albert was driving from Kallenberg, to join the Queen in Coburg. On the way, the horses bolted and he was obliged to jump out of the carriage. When the Queen saw him, he was lying upon his valet's bed, with a lint compress upon his face. Little harm was done, but the Queen felt the sudden danger, the horrible fears of what might have been. 'Oh, God! What did I not feel!' she wrote. And then, in the quiet which came to her afterwards, she gave new proof that she

was rising to personal greatness. She wrote nothing of the horror or the fear. She wrote only of thankfulness, a quiet and sincere knowledge of the munificence of God.

Victoria gave a thousand pounds to the poor people of Coburg, to be used to encourage industry among the young and to provide dowries for poor but virtuous brides. She tried to hide her feelings in the third person when she wrote of the accident in a letter. 'It is when the Queen feels most deeply that she always appears calmest. . . . It is necessity and principle, that the Queen should act thus on all occasions of danger, and she thinks it is right.'³⁵⁹

§ IV — 1858

PRINCESS VICTORIA was only seventeen, and she was to have her baby in January. Albert wrote: 'This will give to the coming grey hairs in my whiskers a certain significance.' He was still but thirty-nine years of age, but he was depressed more and more by the weight of his life, and people who saw him said that he was already an old man. When he spoke at Cherbourg, before the Emperor, he hesitated—a thing he had never done before. The Queen watched him, for she knew that the moment was dreadful for him. Afterwards when the speech was over she shook so that she could not drink her cup of coffee.³⁶⁰

§ V — 1858

IN AUGUST, the Queen and the Prince went to see their daughter in Germany. As they came near to Hanover, they passed a station upon which none other than the Baroness Lehzen stood, waving her white handkerchief to them. The train did not stop, nor did the old governess come as far as Hanover to see them. The sight of the once dreaded figure

must have stirred sharp memories for Prince Albert. They came to Hanover and to the beautiful gardens about the palace at Herenhausen, the romantic scene whence the Queen's ancestors had come to England. Then they came to Brandenburg and found their 'darling child' trembling, smiling upon the platform, with a nosegay in her hand.

The little Princess seemed to be lost in the gaunt, strange Prussian discomfort. But the Queen noted that she had tried to introduce a little Englishness, a little of their own delicacy of decoration into the rooms. There were flowering creepers wound prettily about the screens and lamps and pictures.

Almost as soon as they arrived, Prince Albert was taken away from his daughter to wrestle with the draft for the Indian Proclamation. Lord Malmesbury³⁶¹ was with them in Brandenburg, so Albert was able to discuss this deeply serious document. He decided, with the Queen's support, that it was entirely wrong. It talked of England's power over India instead of her munificence. The document 'should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration,' insisted the Queen, in returning the draft to Lord Derby. But it was Albert who tempered the zeal of the politicians; he softened the proclamation so that India should not be too deeply hurt.

For the most, Brandenburg presented a domestic scene. Princess Victoria was afraid of her new life, afraid of the mystery of becoming a mother. She played duets with her father in the evening and they looked at albums together. But she was 'low and nervous.'³⁶² 'God knows, I felt the same!' wrote the Queen. '. . . I cannot be with her at that very critical moment, when every other mother goes to her child!'

Albert seems to have been very silent. He wrote nothing in his diary except that the parting 'was very painful.' They came back to England and the Prince found a new delight awaiting him. Prince Alfred was upon the wharf at Osborne,

in his midshipman's jacket and cap. He half blushed when his father greeted him. He had passed his examination. A few months before, the Prince had seen his son upon his training ship, climbing and working with an eager care which warmed his heart. Now the boy had made his father richly proud. He had solved the mathematical problems 'almost without a fault.' He had done the translations without a dictionary. The Prince was so pleased that he wrote to Lord Derby, sending him also the examination papers, to prove Alfred's worth. Lord Derby made a picturesque reply. He was grateful, he said, that Her Majesty's Ministers had to pass no such examination . . . it would increase the difficulty of framing an Administration. For the moment, the Prince was genuinely happy.

§ VI — 1858

SINCE HIS seventh year, Prince Albert had been served by a loyal Swiss named Cart. This good fellow had carried him up the spiral staircase of the Rosenau as a child; he had sharpened his wooden sword. He had watched him grow through the years of his education, to the nervous day of his marriage in England. Because they were always together, there are no letters to show how dear master and servant were to each other. But from the Queen's letters we know that Cart adored the Prince and that, through all the anxieties of his life in England, Albert regarded Cart as a friend, talked with him of the scenes of Thuringia and turned to him for sympathy and comfort in times of unhappiness. Cart died in August of 1858, breaking Albert's last link with the old days in Coburg.

While the Queen was dressing, the Prince went into her room, pale, with a telegram in his hand. '*Mein armer Cart ist gestorben!*' he said. The Queen wrote in her diary: 'I turn sick now in writing it. . . . I burst into tears. All day long the

tears would rush every moment to my eyes. . . . Cart was with Albert from his seventh year. . . . He was the only link my loved one had about him which connected him with his childhood, the only one with whom he could talk over old times. I cannot think of my dear husband without Cart! He seemed part of himself. . . . A sad breakfast we had indeed. Albert felt the loss so much, and we had to choke our grief down all day.'

Prince Albert made no complaint, no record of his sorrow. Ten years before, he would have written to Ernst, or to his stepmother to unburden himself of his grief. But a curious, ingrowing morbidity was possessing him. So much had happened to thwart him and to hurt him that he complained no longer. He turned from his bereavement to fresh duties and to new memoranda. He drew up a long report upon the reorganisation of the Indian Army. A few weeks afterwards he noted that his own ideas were confirmed by Lord Clyde and other officers who knew India inside out.

Then Albert turned his attention to France. Louis Napoleon was making no secret of his hopes of expelling the Austrians from Italy. His army and his navy had grown to terrifying power, and there were apprehensions of war. Hot upon the heels of this new danger came the news that the Prince of Prussia was appointed Regent. The King had failed in mind and body. Thus Prince Albert's pupil and Stockmar's ideas of a Constitutional Monarch for Germany were brought a little nearer to the light. Albert's influence came closer to the throne. Stockmar hurried to Berlin and sat beside the Prussian Regent, to hear him talk of new Government, of new ideas, and of emancipation. Stockmar, old and weakened by ill-health, heard almost his own, old ambitions expressed in the Regent's declaration. He was so touched and so pleased that he bent and kissed the Royal hand.

§ VII — 1859

DURING DECEMBER of 1858, the Prince Consort was weary and ill. He took to his room for some of the time, raising himself to half-hearted efforts, but seldom complaining of his depression.

The new year came in with wonderful excitements. Within the boundaries of England, Parliamentary Reform caused vital moves upon the chessboard of Westminster. But on the Continent, there was the storm between Austria and France and Italy, to stir the Prince to new theories, new letters and reports. In this year, he seemed to rise to the greatest height of his reputation abroad.

Albert's failing health reduced his energy, but he still spread his wings. Even King Leopold was a little overpowered by the wisdom of his nephew. Albert criticised his uncle's policy and the weakness shown by his agent in talking to Louis Napoleon. Prince Albert was always right. He seemed to be guided by some awful moral power, some ability to think more clearly and more coldly than any other man in Europe. In his most arrogant moment, Louis Napoleon never forgot this power. '... there are but three men in Europe,' the French Emperor had said to Cavour. '... we two, and a third, whom I will not name.'³⁶³

When the dangers of war between France and Austria were agitating Prussia, it was to Albert that the Prince of Prussia wrote for advice. If only Prince Albert would give the advice, he said, it would 'be decisive' for Prussia.

The Prince Consort wrote him long letters—letters which were so cold and thoughtful that they still stand out from the shadows of history as remarkable documents.³⁶⁴ His courageous and frank advice went as far as the Prussian Chamber and, a few days afterwards, Prussia's foreign policy was announced. It was exactly what Prince Albert

had indicated.⁸⁶⁵ His influence in Germany was growing. He wrote a long treatise for the Princess Royal, on the advantages of Constitutional Government. With this in her hand, she proceeded to impress the advantages of her father's liberal teaching still further upon her Prussian friends. Her schemes were in no way welcome to the ears of the Prussian aristocracy.

§ VIII — 1859

ALBERT COMPLAINED: 'I am weary and out of heart.'⁸⁶⁶ The news had come from Berlin that his little German grandson was born. Albert's daughter had suffered terribly and she was lonely.

The struggle over the Reform Bill was beginning. Almost every day, Mr. Disraeli's grand letters came to tell the Queen and Albert what had happened in the House. With his pen, political squabbles took on a certain magnificence. The Derby Government wished for a franchise based on personal property. While Louis Napoleon intrigued against Austria, while Cavour dreamed of emancipation, and while Prussia wondered, a little anxiously, upon which land the bomb would fall, the English Parliament wrangled through the contest over the new Bill. Disraeli told the Queen that Palmerston was nothing less than 'infinitely audacious.' It was pleasant to feel that a really intelligent man like Mr. Disraeli agreed with their old prejudice. The Prince Consort too thought Palmerston nothing less than 'insolent.' The wrangle and the conditions leading up to the change in Government need not be told again in these pages. In June, Lord Derby placed his resignation in the Queen's hands—at a moment when Europe was disturbed and when the Queen needed a secure and formidable Government more than ever.

Ten days afterwards, the Prince Consort wrote to Stockmar. 'Our new Ministry is formed and in office. It is looked

upon as the strongest that was ever formed.' In his seventy-fourth year, Palmerston came again to the Queen as her Prime Minister. He seemed to be as vigorous as ever. He was alive to his success, alert in his wish to settle the muddle of Europe. He found Prince Albert older than himself; the smile which had been so entrancing a few years before had lost its radiance.

•

Chapter Thirty-four

§ 1 — 1859

WHEN A man is wise, he is inclined to withdraw more and more from the world. When he is inevitably right in his judgments, when his instincts are irreproachable, he becomes lonely. His despair can be more pathetic than that of a man torn by failure. Prince Albert was such a man.

After seventy years have passed, one turns over the thousands of pages of his letters and memoranda, to find that his judgments were touched with prophecy. One of Prince Albert's judgments which shines in the account of these last years concerns Louis Napoleon. The fantasy of friendship between the French and the British had been revived twice during Albert's years in England. He had seen the Queen and her politicians court Louis Philippe, suffer his deception and yet harbour him when he came begging at England's door. Then, in turn, he had observed the Queen's ecstasy over Louis Napoleon. The emancipated parvenu had kissed her hand—he had flattered her. His were pretty attentions, decorated with gestures which were impossible in Albert. There was chivalry in Albert's heart but little in his manners.

Albert thought of the duplicity of French character as an historical fact. While the Queen was kissing the Empress upon the cheek, while she was accepting the Emperor's assurances and attentions as a new, delicious flower thrown at her feet, Albert remained cold: he made no comment. He thought Louis Napoleon to be an adventurer. Although he tried to appeal to his honour in their talks at Osborne and Windsor, and although the Emperor had professed such admiration for his qualities, Albert knew also that a man could admire virtue without adopting it for himself. Thus armed against surprise, he

accepted the war between France and Austria as merely another gloomy experience in the passing of the century.

§ II — 1859

WAR WAS declared in April and the Queen wrote to her uncle of the *wicked folly of Russia and France* and the *blindness of Austria*, combining to devastate Europe again with anxiety and bloodshed. The Prince's comment was not so ecstatic, but he complained to Ernst of Austria's inability to reign in peace or fight in war.³⁶⁷

'God knows we are in a sad mess,' wrote the Queen, with healthy candour. France and Sardinia urged on their bloody campaign to oust Austria from the Italian provinces and Louis Napoleon gained his victories, but at such terrible cost to his own country that, in July, he was as anxious for peace as he had been for war. Peace came, the Italian provinces were juggled again and Louis Napoleon returned to Paris, with the reputation of being a successful man in war and the self-satisfaction of having given Italy the opportunity of being 'mistress of her own destinies.'

Germany was dismayed. The ambitious Emperor might wish to turn towards the Rhineland for fresh conquests. England had a less heroic picture of the Emperor's venture. The Prince Consort and even Palmerston, who had always been so eager to sponsor the cause of France, agreed that Louis Napoleon had shed the blood of his soldiers in vain. This impression swept over all England. The French Emperor may have released the Italian provinces from the tyranny of Austria, but he had also served his own ambitions; and once served, they might require fresh worlds to conquer.

The Pope believed that Louis Napoleon would attack England sooner or later.³⁶⁸ The Queen and Lord John Russell corresponded upon this danger, and agreed that the

safe, and honest line of conduct for England would be to be well armed, and to be just to all her neighbours. There was a fever upon Louis Napoleon and he might do anything. This fear possessed all Britain, and stimulated the Volunteer movement so that when the following summer came, one hundred and thirty thousand men had been enrolled. The recommendations of the National Defence Committee were adopted and in August of 1860, twenty-one thousand volunteers marched past the Queen in Hyde Park. England was again reassured of her strength and splendour. While Prussia anxiously watched France, while the Pope heard threats against his temporal power and while Mr. Cobden was preparing a commercial treaty which would bind England and France together to their mutual advantage, England settled down to security and was so complacent that nobody outside the Court noticed Prince Albert's failing health and energies. 'I believe worry over political affairs . . . is chiefly to blame for it,' he wrote to his daughter.

Prince Albert was curiously silent during these months. Within a few hours of the English coast was France, with half a million men and the strongest steam fleet in the world. Five years ago, the Prince would have turned to such a question with eagerness; endless memoranda would have grown under his hand.

Now he wrote recalling the past. *Do you remember* was the note of his letters to Stockmar. *The happier times* were recalled in his letters to his daughter in Berlin. He wrote to her also of 'this suffering and difficult world.'

The Prince of Wales was travelling abroad. Colonel Bruce was now his governor, guiding the boy's progress as Albert would wish. They had been to see the Pope, but Bertie was not allowed to sit alone with His Holiness. As the Queen wrote to her uncle: 'God knows' what they might have pretended had been said by her son if Colonel Bruce had not been there as a witness.³⁸⁹

Prince Albert was tired and he was no longer calm when he approached new public duties. He read many thick volumes to prepare his speech for the British Association for the Promotion of Science. 'I . . . write, perspire, and tear what I have written to shreds in sheer vexation,' he wrote. The will was as splendid as ever, but the nervous energy which was required to sustain it was slowly dying away.

Chapter Thirty-five

§ 1 — 1860

AGAIN IN the New Year, Prince Albert was 'tired to death with work, vexation and worry. . . .'³⁷⁰ But he turned from the provoking affairs of state, and was refreshed and pleased by his children. His family was complete—there were four sons and five daughters, all growing, learning, and developing the qualities of character he most admired. His eldest daughter was in Berlin; her baby, William, in a flutter of white muslin and black bows, was chuckling and smiling with promise. The Queen was not quite so pleased with her. She thought the Prussians pompous and she 'pitched into' her daughter for showing symptoms of the same fault.³⁷¹ In her leisure hours she was painting illustrations for her father's copy of *Idylls of the King*. She had already written from Berlin to say that she had met the fair Danish Princess Alexandra, whom she thought most suitable 'for Bertie.'

The Prince of Wales himself was still at Oxford. He had passed a difficult examination. During one vacation, he went to Coburg, where Stockmar scrutinised the result of Prince Albert's work. He wrote from Coburg that he saw many signs of improvement. The Prince came to understand his son a little more clearly. 'He has a strange nature,' he wrote.³⁷² '. . . he has no interest in things, but all the more for persons. This trait in his character, which is often found in the Royal Family, has made the family so popular. But it also arouses the dangerous inclination for what the people here call "small talk".'

Prince Alfred also pleased his father. He was attentive and eager and the Prince Consort was especially pleased to note that in the brain of his sailor son, prejudice had no chance against straightforward logic.

The future of Princess Alice³⁷³ was also being planned. In July, Prince Albert wrote to his brother: 'Young Prince Ludwig [of Hesse] seems to have taken a fancy to Alice while he was here, and he seems to have lighted a flame in her also. . . . We heard nothing but good about him and what we saw of him pleased us very much.'

Of the younger children, none delighted the Prince Consort more than Princess Beatrice. Lady Augusta Bruce tells us that she was an enchanting and bewitching child. There was a pretty and harmless naughtiness about much that she said. Nor was she awed by the magnificence of her parents. We have a picture of her, in the summer at Osborne, running about the lawns, or asking the Duchess of Kent to play to her and singing the tunes 'with a most husky pot-house voice.' Then we find her within the new house her parents had made, aggravating her father so that he was obliged to say 'You are very troublesome.' 'No, Baby's not, she's a little girl,' was the answer.

In March, the Prince was at Osborne again. The snow was gone and the stiff camelia trees were in blossom. He was elated because he had not lost one of his pet plants. He was pleased too, with the news from Westminster. He had fallen under the spell of Gladstone's speeches and he wrote: 'Gladstone is now the real leader of the House of Commons, and works with an energy and vigour altogether incredible. . . .'³⁷⁴

Instead of himself turning to the Queen's Ministers for advice, the Prince became the adviser of the Ministers. In March of 1860 Lord John Russell wrote to him, asking for information and guidance for his future dealings with Germany. Here was another and rich opportunity for the Prince. He wrote a letter of two thousand words which tidied up the chaos in Lord John's mind and put the history of German affairs and his own theories into a nutshell. The vanity of an ordinary human might have brought him satisfaction and pleasure when he was thus applied to.

One distressing letter from Lord Palmerston awaited Victoria and Albert when they returned to London from Osborne. Palmerston had driven through London in a cab with Count Flavhault, a friend of Louis Napoleon. Their talk had become so blunt that they had spoke openly about the prospects of war between their two countries. As the cab rattled towards Westminster, Flavhault warned Palmerston that the French Army was far superior to the one the English had met at Waterloo. They talked of invasion and although Palmerston reported the tone of the conversation as 'most friendly,' he was careful to set its warnings before the Queen and Prince, in case it should be distorted in Paris.

§ II — 1860

THE PRINCE turned from the Old World to the New. It was difficult for English people of his day to have a clear idea of what was meant by *The Queen's Empire*. A few rich Australian sheep-owners had come home with their fortunes. New Zealand produce was being served on English tables and loyal people had succumbed to the frightening experiment of drinking Empire wines. But the new, far away countries were associated with ne'er-do-well sons and a degree of physical energy which was slightly vulgar. Conventional English people shivered before the prospect of galvanised iron houses, tinned food and Nonconformist missionaries. The better class of Englishmen had always thought that anybody from the Continent was a little inferior to themselves; now they came to feel that their sons had lost caste by going overseas. Great Britain was still depressed with the memory of poisoners and sheep-stealers, wilting in Tasmanian prisons.

Prince Albert had no such prejudices or feelings. He contemplated Africa and Canada and saw in them a cheering picture. Indeed, he talked of their achievements and of their

affection for his children, as the 'only bright side of the political horizon.'³⁷⁵

He had a sudden and poetic realisation of the possibilities in the half-known edges of the world. Prince Alfred was to go to the Cape of Good Hope to lay the foundation stone of the breakwater at the foot of Table Mountain. The Prince of Wales was to go to Canada to open the bridge across the St. Lawrence 'in Victoria's name.' In writing to his brother Albert said that the Canadians wished 'to show the Americans how happy, free and yet monarchical it is possible to be.'³⁷⁶ He drew up for himself a picture full of fantasy, a picture of the mighty St. Lawrence, with its rafts of white ice, the bridge which set the seal of progress upon the new earth, and he remembered that the Cape of Good Hope looked out over the meeting place of two oceans, towards the mysterious, white, undiscovered pole. His sons were to go to inaugurate important developments of far away corners of the earth, in carefully written speeches. He left the fantasy to write the words for them. There must be no mistake, no hesitation, no confusion of phrases when his sons spoke in their mother's name.

§ III — 1860

IN CARISBROOKE castle there is a treadmill which is worked by donkeys to this day. Here, where Charles the First was imprisoned, where the turrets are forlorn and the arrow slits filled with cobwebs, the great wheel still turns, for the delight of children. As the patient donkey treads on and on, within the vast wooden cylinder, the buckets of water come up from the black depth of the well.

In May, 1860, at Osborne, not so many miles away from Carisbrooke, Prince Albert retired again to his room, to write to his daughter in Berlin. From his window he could see the lilacs, the peonies and the thorn. He was 'tortured'

and he poured out his complaint to her. There were to be two public dinners, one with ten speeches and one with seven. He had to attend the British Association at Oxford, lay a foundation stone in London, give prizes at Wellington College, sit on several commissions, go to Ascot, which he loathed, attend balls and concerts and wrestle with Parliament. Before he began the letter he had walked over to Carisbrooke, to see the treadmill. When he came home he wrote: 'The donkey in Carisbrooke . . . is my true counterpart. He, too, would rather munch thistles in the Castle Moat . . . small are the thanks he gets for his labour.'³⁷⁷

§ IV — 1860

THE PRINCE's depression passed from him when he returned to London for the season. There was only one great distress and this was born of the erratic schemes of Louis Napoleon. The French Emperor had suddenly discovered the merits of candour. He met the Prince Regent at Baden and assured him of his peaceful and friendly wishes for Germany. He wrote to Persigny, entreating him to talk to Palmerston and assure him also that France was not arming herself against Europe, least of all against England. The overtures did not warm Prince Albert to enthusiasm. He coldly said that once confidence was lost, it was 'not given to every man to regain.'

So he left Louis Napoleon to his own devices and enjoyed the promise of security in Palmerston's earnest efforts to increase England's defences. Though differing in many things, the Prince and Palmerston were in complete accord in this passion for armed safety. Gladstone demurred—he had milder ideas of how peace could be maintained. But, as Palmerston said, it would be better to lose Mr. Gladstone than to risk losing Portsmouth or Plymouth.³⁷⁸

There was also an exchange of compliments between the Prince and Tennyson. Prince Albert never enjoyed what he

had earlier described as the 'vortex of society.' London society was now a brilliant institution, drawing its money from increased industrial prosperity, bringing its dresses from Paris. It was a society based upon more moral and gentle principles than the old age of bucks. The coaches no longer whirled to Brighton, with elegant but dissolute peers upon the box seats, boasting of their amorous adventures, brushing errant speckles of snuff from their coats. Trains came up from Brighton to London, or from other places to which the new iron roads had been made, and the ladies and gentlemen within them were ladies and gentlemen indeed. They went to see Mr. Landseer's latest picture in the Academy and were pleased to find that their friends, smiling to them above furbelows of majenta and puce, also enjoyed this new era of restrained art. There was an angular peeress who nodded her bugled bonnet and vowed that she had hidden a disgusting Rubens, bought by her father-in-law, high up in a garret. Leighton was painting Cleopatra, so innocently that she could be hung upon the dining-room wall without bringing blushes to a daughter's cheek. Mr. Landseer's stags stared stupidly but prettily from the walls of drawing-rooms; furniture was gay with brocades from the continent. There were U shaped sofas covered with Genoa velvet. Tables were exciting to see; they were crowded with books, bound in watered-silk, inscribed by poets who were respectable as well as clever.

There lay behind all the affectations and the little crimes of taste an earnestness and an honesty which have since been twisted into caricature. Virtue was woman's adornment and not yet her reproach. Divorce was viewed as being horrible. The Queen had risen in indignation: she had excluded all divorced people from her society—they stared over the barriers at Ascot, into the Royal Enclosure, like black sheep. She had urged the Lord Chancellor to do something about the candour of divorce reports in the newspapers. No 'young

lady or boy' could read them without blushing. They were more dangerous than the 'worst French novels.' The Queen liked to sit in moral judgment upon her people; she did it for their good.

Only her adoration of her husband made her turn her back upon so many drawing-rooms where she might have talked and laughed and where she might have seen the splendid Victorian scene, as sparkling as the chandeliers above. Albert found no such pleasure in society. He addressed the Statistical Society with a speech so faultless that the heavy statisticians adopted it, translated it, and vowed that it was the greatest address upon the subject heard from any man in any country. He scanned the new pictures at the Academy and wrote sadly to his daughter, because Landseer's new canvas was a 'complete failure.'³⁷⁹ He crept away from the crowded drawing-room to read in his own room. One book he read during this year was *Idylls of the King*. He wrote to Mr. Tennyson, apologising for intruding upon 'his leisure,' and asked him to write his name in a copy of the book.

Tennyson paid his patron a graceful compliment. He supposed that Prince Albert's appreciation of the poems arose from his seeing in them, 'unconsciously,' an image of himself.

§ v — 1860

THE SUMMER came and a new baby was born in Berlin. Albert was grandfather to a girl as well as a boy: his own children jumped with joy. Princess Beatrice, then aged three, found herself so busy that when she was asked a question, she complained that she had no time to spare. 'I must write letters to my niece,' she protested. The engagement of Princess Alice was announced. Prince Albert wrote to his brother of the bridegroom, straightforward, open and reliable.³⁸⁰ 'If true love could guarantee a happy future life,' then, he was

certain, such happiness awaited his daughter when she went to live in the Court at Darmstadt.

But the news from Canada was the most delightful of all. The Prince of Wales had opened the great bridge across the St. Lawrence. With his father's speech in his hands, he had won the hearts of the Canadian people. The rough fishermen and their wives in Newfoundland had been 'wild about him.' 'God bless his pretty face and send him a good wife,' they cried. The Archdeacon's wife noticed his gentle and reverential manner with the Bishop. The old Bishop had walked through the Cathedral with the Prince and he was so touched by the boy's charm that he sobbed when he was gone: 'God bless my dear young Prince.'³⁸¹

Albert smiled again. The fruit upon the tree was growing richer. The patient and anxious hours, beneath the persistent green lamp upon his desk, were being rewarded.

•

Chapter Thirty-six

§ 1 — 1860

THE WINTER came, and with it, more and more complaints from Prince Albert. He could not sleep: he turned his head upon the pillow, his gums swollen, the nerves in his cheeks inflamed, his brain agitated by the procession of affairs. The Queen watched him, day by day, anxious and afraid. Again and again she recalled his saying that he had little will to live. One day he was 'too miserable' even to write to his daughter. Their correspondence had aroused the suspicions of *The Times*: again the paper made insinuations against him. He threw the newspaper aside: there were more important papers upon his table, some of them letters which aroused his old agitation about the navy. 'It is a perfect disgrace to our country,' he wrote to Lord John Russell. The English self-assurance exasperated him at moments. The French were building ships and carrying out new and proud experiments, while the English were satisfied with hobbling after them, complacent and neglectful. The Prince's letters to the Ministers and the Admiralty were seldom as angry as now. Within a few hours, the Duke of Somerset, the First Lord of the Admiralty, reassured him. More iron-cased ships were to be built and France would be watched more carefully.

From Berlin there came a long and serious memorandum written by the Princess Royal. She had caught up the reins which were falling from Albert's hands. The memorandum was full of such sober thoughts as he would have expressed ten years before. This busy mother, herself only twenty years of age, had written upon the law of Ministerial responsibility. Her father's heart was delighted; he wrote of his joy to the aged Baron. Stockmar was a shadow, a shade peering from the past. Albert himself was weakening and the first

fine energy had withered within him. He coughed and he felt weak, his stomach depressed him and kept him ill.

Christmas came, more coldly that it had come for fifty years. The family was gathered together within Windsor Castle. All but his beloved eldest daughter were about Albert. He wrote pathetic letters to her—if only she were with him. *She* understood him, *she* responded to his ideas as quickly as she sympathised with his depression. In his abstraction he called Prince Louis ‘Fritz,’ so much were his thoughts with the couple in Prussia.

‘Oh! if you, with Fritz and the children, were only with us,’ he pleaded again. His children were to be scattered over the world. The Prince of Wales was going to Cambridge, Prince Alfred was going to North America, Princess Alice was to be married and to go to Darmstadt. He looked out of the Castle windows and saw the snow thick upon the ground. He watched the hungry birds and remembered Stockmar, breaking a piece of bread in his hand and throwing the crumbs out to them in the snow. The past was so full of memories and of anxieties, that the future was not to be contemplated. But he rose early every morning. ‘I am tired,’ he complained, again and again, but the world was marching on. Affairs had to be adjusted, advice was to be given, children were to be guided, France was to be watched—India and China also. He got up earlier and earlier; his memoranda grew and grew and when he did take a little leisure, he admitted it guiltily. He hurried when he went out shooting. ‘I don’t understand people making a business of shooting,’³⁸² he said, rushing back to his desk and working until midnight.

§ II — 1861

PEOPLE WERE ageing and dying. Albert’s daughter had walked into the room to see the King of Prussia lying dead upon his bed, like a sleeping child. She had leaned down and

kissed the cold hands. Aberdeen had also died. Albert seemed to take the winter of life into himself. He watched the people growing old about him, he wrote more and more of his physical state; his letters were morbid with the weight from which he would not allow himself to escape.

'I can't write more,' he complained to his brother. 'I have so much to do, sad and important things, so much to console and see after.'³⁸³

He thought of Stockmar, growing older and older; he wrote in despair because his doctor was killed in a railway accident. He watched the Duchess of Kent, sitting upon her sofa, nodding, half asleep, waking up now and then to smile at him. But her smile was very sad, for she was ill and in pain. Albert might have drawn some inspiration from her courage. She would sometimes stand up and cross the room to the piano and there, with her hands bandaged, her arm in pain because of the disease which was destroying her, she would awaken an old ballad from the keys.

§ III — 1861

IN FEBRUARY, there came a day when the Duchess of Kent could neither write nor play the piano any more. She had become very dear and tender in these last years of her life. The young and vigorous ambitions had died long ago; her daughter was secure and omnipotent upon the throne. Albert was beside her. So she had withdrawn to gentle occupations; she embroidered handbags and fire screens, or she played games of whist with her ladies.

She went down to Frogmore in February. The doctor had seen the Duchess and he had told the Queen that there was nothing but pain and suffering in prospect. But the Duchess smiled, even then. In the evening of the day when they arrived, Lady Augusta went upstairs, to find her mistress unpacking the treasures of her writing table, 'looking

particularly nice,' and in 'much better spirits.' She was unwrapping all her treasures from their folds of silver paper. Just before she went to bed, she asked for the old big watch, in its tortoiseshell case, which had belonged to the Duke of Kent. She wound it up and then she went to sleep.

A few days afterwards, the Queen and Prince Albert hurried down from London. They arrived too late to be recognised. Three times during the night, Queen Victoria crept down to her mother's room, carrying a little lamp. In the darkness she could hear the heavy breathing and the ticking of her father's watch—she had not heard it for twenty-three years. Standing in the bedroom, she remembered her childhood, the old distresses of Kensington, the hazardous years through which she had been guided by Albert, into calm.

At four o'clock in the morning, she stole down again, and kneeling beside the bed, she kissed her mother's hand, whispering 'Mama,' so lovingly and earnestly as if the sound must arouse her.³⁸⁴

The next time she came downstairs, the Queen bent over her mother and heard the breathing grow fainter and fainter. At last it ceased, and, in that moment, the old watch struck half-past nine. Albert was with her. He cried for a moment, then he raised the Queen and led her away.

For some time there were terrible rumours about the Queen's reason. She had suddenly become old and weak. Albert consoled her. He was 'so tender and kind, and full of loving affection.'

'... well our beloved one knew his heart,' wrote Lady Augusta, as she watched him moving about the gloomy rooms of Frogmore. '... could you have seen his tears, could you see his sorrow now—his fondness for the Queen. Oh! may God bless them in their Children and reward them. . . .'

'... I never saw such tact as his. . . . Oh! He is one in

millions—well might She love Him as She did. I was so struck with His appreciation of Her. It was so true, and for One who is supposed to place intellect and reasoning powers above all, so remarkable. . . .’

§ IV — 1861

IN JUNE, the Queen was sadly recovered. But the tragic rumour that her reason was affected had spread far into Europe. ‘I cannot understand how these horrid, vile rumours about her mental state could arise,’ Prince Albert wrote to Ernst. ‘. . . people here and on the continent are much occupied with these rumours. They have annoyed me tremendously, as I know what the consequences might be. She herself is perfectly unaware of all this scandal.’³⁸⁵

•

Chapter Thirty-seven

§ 1 — 1861

ONE NIGHT, Disraeli sat next to the Prince of Wales at dinner. He thought the boy 'intelligent, informed, and with a singularly sweet manner.'³⁸⁵

Under Colonel Bruce's instruction the Prince was growing nearer to his father's ideal. He had come back from Canada, grown, and become *more manly*, his charm strengthened with confidence. His grandmother had whispered a question to Colonel Bruce. Had there been any incipient flirting? But the Colonel had reassured her: the Prince had been delighted to dance with every one of his thousand partners and he had made no distinctions.

He had always been guarded with care. When the King of Italy³⁸⁷ had been at Windsor, he had won the Prince's heart with his boast that he could cut off an ox's head with one stroke of the sword. Such prowess delighted the Prince of Wales. But the Italian King had made a different kind of boast to the Queen. One day he showed her a photograph of his children. Queen Victoria admired them and congratulated him. 'Ah,' answered the King, 'this is nothing . . . you should see my other family.'³⁸⁸ Clearly, she thought, such a monarch was not a suitable host for the young Prince when he went abroad. His later invitation was refused. The Queen and the Prince had other ideas as to how their son should approach marriage.

The history of the betrothal of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra was clearly explained in almost the last letter written by the Prince Consort to his brother, in July of 1861.³⁸⁹ Duke Ernst had protested against a match between 'Bertie' and a Danish Princess. Indeed, Ernst had gone so far as to use his influence upon his nephew, thus jeopardising the carefully made plans of Prince

Albert and the Princess Royal. Albert wrote in anger to him:

'I received your protest against a marriage between Bertie and a Danish Princess. . . . Your position, your relationship and your friendship give you a right to think of Bertie's welfare and the political unions for his future. But what annoys me is, that you spoke to a third person about such delicate and secret affairs, and that you sent me a memorandum which was written by a *secretary*.

' . . . We took care not to let Bertie know about the existence of Princess Alexandra, but we told him of all other possibilities. We find it rather strange that just *you* should tell him about this one Princess and warn him not to marry her, nor to allow himself to be induced to marry her. . . . It was wrong to do so behind our backs.

' . . . Now he has heard from all sides about the beauty of the Princess and he has seen photographs of her in the rooms of the Duchess of Cambridge, at Kew, and they confirmed what he had heard. We explained the political difficulties such a marriage would bring with it, as well as we could. He understood, as well as a young man of his age and his capacities is able to understand them.

'But as we practically have the public opinion against us, and as we should also have our ministers, people and the press against us, we were anxious to find another lady suitable for Bertie. (It is his wish to marry soon and it is in his interests, morally, socially and politically.) But we find there is really no other Princess he could marry. The Princess of Meiningen and the daughter of Prince Albrecht of Prussia, he had the opportunity of seeing when he was in Berlin, but they did not please him.

'Vicky has racked her brain, too, to help us to find some one, but in vain. The daughter of Prince Friedrich of the Netherlands is too ugly. There are positively *no other*

Princesses except the sister of Louis . . . and this would connect us for a second time with Darmstadt. All this made it clear to us that Princess Alexandra is the only one to be chosen.

‘But now we must see that this marriage is not looked upon as a triumph of Denmark, over us and Prussia, and that it came about without the Danes knowing about it, without the knowledge of our Ministers and the Cambridges, but quite alone, through the mediation of our Prussian children . . . if we wish to found a happy future for Bertie, we have no other choice. . . .’

The letter was written from Osborne, whither the Court had gone in the Spring.

The Queen was slowly recovering from her deep sorrow. She had spent hours and hours going through her mother’s papers—diaries of the days when she was a child at Kensington. She had found a record of the anxious love which her mother had hidden, behind her royal ambitions. ‘I have found little books with the accounts of my babyhood, and they show *such* unbounded tenderness! OH! I am so wretched to think how, *for a time, two people most wickedly estranged us.*’³⁹⁰ She shivered at the memory of Conroy and Lehzen. New and wonderful changes had come to her. The Prince wrote to Stockmar of how during the past two years, the Queen had come to understand her mother, of how she had watched over her, pouring upon her all the affection she had withheld in the first years when she came to the throne. He had watched too ‘the influence of this upon her own character.’ Whatever newspapers might say and however little the outside world knew it, Albert’s influence and example had given the Queen the courage, and the character out of which she was now to make her own greatness.

‘By business I am well nigh overwhelmed,’ the Prince wrote to Stockmar, in April. ‘I do my utmost to save

Victoria all trouble.' He watched Mr. Gladstone introducing his Budget, the repeal of the Paper Duty, the quarrels over expenditure upon the navy and the army. He was exasperated. The Government would not learn its lesson from the Crimea and the Mutiny.

The Prince seemed to tire of the wrangles of Westminster: again he turned his attention to Europe. He could not sleep at night. Ill, feverish, with pain in his limbs, he lay in bed, planning memoranda upon the Schleswig-Holstein affair, planning long letters to his Prussian friends, theorising over their government. Later in the year he did not sleep for fourteen nights. He appeared in public two or three times, but people saw that he was pallid and worn.³⁹¹

§ II

IN OCTOBER, the King of Prussia was crowned. Lord Granville thought that one of the most graceful and touching sights was the Princess Royal doing homage to the King. Clarendon too, was there, and he was at a loss for words to express his feelings when he saw her unaffected grace.

Prince Albert had many things to content him, although America was beginning her Civil War and Prussia and France were estranged. But his son was at Cambridge, improving his character, learning obedience, accepting the idea of marriage without demur. His daughter was blossoming in Prussia and as she walked among the white marble statues at Sans Souci, she talked earnestly to the little group of sympathetic friends she had gathered about her.

But *The Times* was still the most painful thorn in Albert's side. All his dreams of friendship with Prussia were poisoned by the incessant criticism. He lost his wits puzzling about these matters.³⁹²

Late in October, the Court went to Windsor. The Prince

went to London one day to look into the affairs of the Duchy of Cornwall and also to preside over a meeting of Governors of Wellington College. He returned to Windsor to learn that the King of Portugal was dying. Only a little time before, Sir James Graham had died. Depression settled upon Albert again: 'I am fearfully in want of a true friend,' he pleaded to Stockmar. The Prince's doctors and secretaries were anxious—he was killing himself with engagements. The Exhibition for the coming year, Sandhurst, Wellington College, the Duchy business, the Horticultural Society—he rushed from one thing to another, thorough and ruthless. The protests were not heeded. Yet Albert warned his daughter: '... spare yourself.' Then he spoke of true happiness, of how it came only from an inner consciousness that one's efforts were directed to good and useful work.

It was about this time that Albert said to the Queen: 'I do not cling to life. You do; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow. . . . If I had a severe illness, I should give up at once, I should not struggle for life.'³⁹³

This confession, which the Queen remembered with awful certainty, was a key to the depths of the Prince's character. His religion was deep within him, but it did not hold him to the earth with any great love.

Chapter Thirty-eight

§ 1 — 1861

ON NOVEMBER 22nd, Prince Albert drove over to Sandhurst to see the buildings of the new Staff College. The day was cold and dark and the rain fell incessantly. He returned to Windsor, ill and tired. On the following Sunday the weather cleared again and, with the Queen, he walked down to Frogmore. The house was still and deserted and the dome of the new Mausoleum rose like a fabulous bubble above the trees. When they arrived back in the Castle, Albert wrote in his diary: 'Am full of rheumatic pains, and feel thoroughly unwell. Have scarcely closed my eyes at night for the last fortnight.'³⁹⁴

Monday saw him travelling through the cold and storm to Cambridge. During the fourteen sleepless nights, he had thought and thought of his son. He must see him, in the midst of his Cambridge life. He stayed there for one day and was back in Windsor on Tuesday—again he wrote that he was wretched and that his back and legs were in pain.

The one horror which aroused him from his dreariness and sickness was the Trent affair. The Americans had outraged the British Flag and the British Ministers were hot for reprisals. The drafts of their incensed dispatches were sent down to Windsor and, with hasty, feverish hands, Prince Albert turned over their pages. The language must be softened. Albert wrote out a new despatch, in the Queen's name. It has since been said that the skill of his phrasing saved England and America from war. He took the draft into the Queen's room. She looked at him anxiously and saw the wretched and ill expression upon his face. Then she looked at the writing. He had hardly been able to hold the pen.³⁹⁵

On December 5th the Queen wrote: 'He did not smile or

take much notice of me. . . . His manner all along was so unlike himself, and he had sometimes such a strange, wild look. I left him to get dressed in a state of cruel anxiety. . . . In the evening he seemed more himself, most dear and affectionate when I went in with little Beatrice, whom he kissed. He quite laughed at some of her new French verses which I made her repeat.'

Dr. Jenner came. He saw that work had weakened and exhausted the Prince and he urged the Queen to speak to the Ministers. But Albert would not even go to bed. Three days afterwards, he seemed to recover a little of his power. The day was sunny—he looked out of the window, was pleased with the more cheerful scene, and asked for some music. Princess Alice went into the next room and played *Eine Feste Burg ist Unser Gott*, and later, when evening came, the Queen sat beside him and read *Peveril of the Peak* to him. He was more contented. When Victoria leaned near to him, he held her hand and stroked her face. Day after day, the vigil continued. One morning, the Queen went over to him at eight o'clock and found him sitting up, to take his beef tea. . . . 'I supported him, and he laid his dear head—his beautiful face, more beautiful than ever, has grown so thin—on my shoulder, and remained a little while, saying: "It is very comfortable so, dear child," which made me so happy.'

He had talked to her of his not being able to understand how she clung to the present, of his wish to do what was right while he lived, and of his still deeper wish that he should come to the calm and security of death. She watched his sinking with terror. Morning after morning she went to him. The room had a sad look of night watching—the candles burned down to their sockets. 'Never can I forget how beautiful my darling looked lying there with his face lit up by the rising sun—his eyes unusually bright, gazing as it were on unseen objects, but not taking any notice of me.'

' . . . how I wish that I could hear the little birds singing, as

I used to do at Rosenau,' Albert had whispered, when the sun shone upon him through the window.

Victoria watched him, hour after hour. A dusky hue came into his face, he folded his arms and arranged his hair, as though 'he were preparing for another and greater journey.' He called her 'Good little wife,' and he kissed her, but he moaned, as if he felt that he was leaving her. Victoria never cried once, while she was beside him, but every hour or so, she would creep into the next room, in a '*terrible burst of misery*.' 'The country; oh, the country,' she cried. 'I could perhaps bear my own misery, but the poor country.'

While the Queen was out of the bedroom, Princess Alice leaned over her father. She whispered to Lady Augusta, 'that is the death rattle,' and went for her mother. The Queen knelt beside the bed and held her husband's hand. But it was already cold. The breathing grew fainter and fainter. 'Oh, yes, this is death, I know it. I have seen this before,' she whispered. She fell upon his dead body and called him by every endearing name. Then she sank back into the arms of her ladies and they carried her into the next room.

For a moment she lay there, crumpled and dazed. Then, as if some awful power had come to her from the dead, she sat up and asked for her children. They came, one by one, and she told them she would fight, she would live for them and for her duty. She consoled the doctors for their failure. She turned to find the Prince of Wales near her. He threw himself into her arms and said that his whole life would be devoted to her comfort, to an endeavour to diminish her anguish.

Before long, she saw her Ministers. They came in and found her eager to talk, firm in her resolve that none but Albert's memory should dictate to her—that no human power should make her swerve from what he had decided and wished.

Palmerston came, an old, crafty man who had sneered at her and who had been rude to the Prince. He was ushered into the room and when he saw her, sitting upon the sofa, fighting her agony, he wept bitterly.

§ II — 1863

EARLY IN 1863, the Prince of Wales was married at Windsor. With 'wonderful grace and dignity,' the Queen had led the bride and the bridegroom up the stairs, into the Castle. When they had gone, she left the Castle and walked down to Frogmore, where Prince Albert was buried. She could look back and see the great grey towers of the Castle—therein lay the golden story of her happiness. Therein also she was to grow old—so old that a century would bear her name: so old that her memory would reach from the shadows of the past to the age of machines. She would remember three Kings who ruled before her—she would see three generations of Princes who would rule after her. A little figure in a black dress, she was to live on and on, losing the love of her people but regaining it in the last stupendous years of her story.

She went into the high, silent Mausoleum. There she was alone. When the wedding carriages had all gone, when Windsor was quiet again, she walked back from Frogmore to the Castle. Her loneliness was terrible. When people saw the expression upon her face, as she passed down the long corridors, they whispered and withdrew. She felt so much and she understood so little. But through the long loneliness of her life, she never once wavered from a simple religious certainty that if Albert's body was cold in the tomb at Frogmore, his immaculate soul was with God.

REFERENCES

Chapter One

- 1 Only daughter of the Duke Emil August of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg. He was a foolish man: when he tried to ingratiate himself with Napoleon, he built a carriage in the shape of an egg, in green and gold. Napoleon was so furious when he saw it, that he walked into Gotha on foot. The Duke's first wife, Luise Charlotte, a Princess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, had died when Luise was born and he was now married to Caroline Amelie, a Princess of Hessen-Kassel. This second marriage was childless, so the new mother was able to devote herself to Luise.
- 2 From the Introduction to Paul von Ebart's 'Luise, Herzogin Von Sachsen-Coburg-Saalfeld.'
- 3 This and all other quotations from the writing of the Duchess Luise are from letters which she wrote to her friend, Augusta von Studnitz, in Gotha.
- 4 From a record written by Queen Victoria.
- 5 The daughter of the Duchess of Kent, later Queen Victoria's half-sister, married Prince Hohenlohe.
- 6 It was later restored by Duke Ernst II and is now the property of the State.
- 7 Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV, and married to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, died on November 6th, 1817.
- 8 Notes of a conversation with H.R.H. the Duke of Kent at Brussels, December 11th, 1817. The Creevey Papers.
- 9 His doubts were not unfounded. When he died and left his widow and Princess Victoria in poverty, it was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, not the English King nor the English people, who helped them. But in giving credit to Prince Leopold for his help, it must be remembered that he was still receiving an annuity of fifty thousand pounds, settled on him by the British Parliament when he married Princess Charlotte.

Chapter Two

- 10 Afterwards Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Coburg, elder brother of the Prince Consort.
- 11 The biggest chamber in Ehrenburg Castle, in the town of Coburg. It exists to this day, an astonishing room, with twenty-eight colossal plaster giants, supporting an ornate ceiling and separated by crimson velvet curtains.
- 12 From the diary of the Dowager Duchess Augusta.

Chapter Three

- 13 From an account preserved in the Windsor Archives.
- 14 Introduction to the 'Letters of Queen Victoria,' 1837-1861.
- 15 Now preserved in the Archives in Coburg.
- 16 From a letter written by the Duchess Luise to Augusta von Studnitz.
- 17 She referred to her second husband. Her wishes were not carried out, for she was eventually buried in Coburg.

Chapter Four

- 18 Lord Albemarle, in his Autobiography.
- 19 From the Queen's own recollections.
- 20 'Queen Victoria,' Lee.
- 21 From the Queen's own recollections, preserved in Windsor Castle.
- 22 'V.R.I. Her Life and Empire,' by the Duke of Argyll.
- 23 From an account written by Queen Victoria and preserved at Windsor.
- 24 'Early Years of the Prince Consort,' p. 20.
- 25 Memorandum by the Queen.
- 26 'Early Years,' p. 25.
- 27 A letter from the King of the Belgians to Queen Victoria.
- 28 Letter from the Dowager Duchess of Coburg to the Duchess of Kent.
- 29 From the Queen's own recollections.
- 30 'V.R.I. Her Life and Empire,' by the Duke of Argyll.
- 31 'V.R.I. Her Life and Empire,' by the Duke of Argyll.

Chapter Five

- 32 From an account by his tutor.
- 33 A story related to the author by an old servant in Coburg.
- 34 From a hitherto unpublished letter, in the possession of Oberkammerherr Paul von Ebart, in Coburg.
- 35 Appendix B. 'Early Years of the Prince Consort.'
- 36 From a biographical sketch written by his son.
- 37 'Leopold I of Belgium,' by Dr. Egon Cäsar Corti. Chapter II.
- 38 From a letter written by the King of the Belgians and preserved among Baron Stockmar's papers.
- 39 This, with the similar extracts in this chapter, is from King Leopold's letters, published in Volume I of 'Queen Victoria's Letters.'

Chapter Six

- 40 } Appendix B, 'Early Years of the Prince Consort.'
 41 }
 42 'First Years of a Silken Reign,' Tuer and Fagan, 1887.
 43 King Leopold to Princess Victoria, August, 1832.
 44 From a story recounted by the Queen at Osborne, to a friend of
 the author.
 45 Greville 'Memoirs.'
 46 King Leopold to Princess Victoria, May 13th, 1836.
 47 The author remembers talking to Gen. Sir George Higginson,
 on his hundredth birthday. The old soldier recalled a day when he
 rode with the Prince Consort in the Great Park at Windsor, when
 the Prince was still a young man. He said that Prince Albert was
 the handsomest man he had seen in all his life.
 48 A description from the Duchess of Cleveland's 'Recollections.'

Chapter Seven

- 49 From a letter written on June 15th, 1837, from Laaken.
 50 From a letter written on June 17th, from Laaken.
 51 When Dean Stanley met Duke Ernst in Egypt, many years after-
 wards, he wrote: 'If anything could increase the respect for Prince
 Albert and the thankfulness for what he has been to England, it
 may be the reflection of what would have been the difference had
 the Queen married the elder brother instead. He is going to hunt
 in Abyssinia and I trust that I may never set eyes upon him again.'
 Dean Stanley was travelling with the Prince of Wales then and
 he added: 'He looked, amongst these rough Germans, like a real
 little gentleman.'
 52 'Early Years of the Prince Consort,' page 181.
 53 'First Years of a Silken Reign,' Tuer and Fagan, 1887.
 54 'Letters of Queen Victoria,' Volume I, page 175.
 55 } 'Letters of Queen Victoria,' Volume I, page 224.
 56 }
 57 'Life of the Prince Consort,' Volume I, Theodore Martin, page 27.
 58 Sir Francis Seymour, quoted on page 29, 'Life of the Prince
 Consort,' Volume I.
 59 This and all other letters from Prince Albert to his brother are
 here published for the first time. The original letters, which cover
 twenty years of the Prince's life in England, are bound in ten
 volumes and preserved in the archives in Ehrenburg Castle,
 Coburg, and the author has been permitted to quote from them,

through the gracious kindness of the present Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

Chapter Eight

- 60 From the Queen's own account, preserved at Windsor.
- 61 The Queen's Journal.
- 62 Letter to Prince Löwenstein, December 6th, 1839.
- 63 The Queen to the King of the Belgians.
- 64 Prince Albert to Stockmar, November 6th, 1839.
- 65 In his letter to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha.
- 66 Letter to Prince Löwenstein, December 6th, 1839.
- 67 Greville, February 15th, 1840.
- 68 Greville, November 27th, 1839.

Chapter Nine

- 69 } The Queen to Prince Albert, January 17th, 1840.
- 70 }
- 71 'Memoirs of Baron Stockmar,' Volume II, page 28.
- 72 } The Queen to Prince Albert, January 31st, 1840.
- 73 }
- 74 The Queen to Prince Albert, January 17th, 1840. The Court was in mourning for Princess Elizabeth, Landgräfin Von Hessen-Homburg, third daughter of George III.
- 75 Justin McCarthy, in 'A History of Our Own Times,' Volume I, chapter VII.
- 76 King Leopold to Queen Victoria, Brussels, February 1st, 1840.
- 77 } King Leopold to Queen Victoria, Brussels, February 4th, 1840.
- 78 }
- 79 Greville, February 13th, 1840.
- 80 *The Times*, February 11th, 1840.
- 81 *The Times*, February 11th, 1840.

Chapter Ten

- 82 The Queen to King Leopold, February 11th, 1840.
- 83 Greville, February 13th, 1840.
- 84 Greville, February 26th, 1840.
- 85 Greville, February 13th, 1840.
- 86 King Leopold to the Queen, June 1st, 1838.
- 87 'Girlhood,' April 18th, 1839.
- 88 The Queen's Journal.
- 89 Memorandum by Mr. Anson, May 25th, 1840. 'Letters.'
- 90 Lady Lytzelton's Letters.

- 91 Prince Albert to his brother, August 22nd, 1840.
- 92 Prince of Coburg, married to the Queen of Portugal.
- 93 The Duke of Sussex, uncle of the Queen.
- 94 Martin, Vol. I, page 89.
- 95 Greville, March 12th, 1840.
- 96 Greville, March 14th, 1840.
- 97 Theodore Martin, Vol. I, page 71.
- 98 Prince Albert to his brother, August 22nd, 1840.
- 99 Memorandum by Anson, August 7th, 1841.
- 100 Some years after the Prince's death, the Queen was talking of him to Dean Stanley. She said: 'I can never be sufficiently thankful that I passed safely through those two years to my marriage. Then I was in a safe haven and there I remained for twenty years. Now that is over, and I am again at sea, always wishing to consult one who is not here, groping by myself with a constant sense of isolation.' 'Life of Dean Stanley,' Vol. II, page 127, Prothero.

Chapter Eleven

- 101 Martin, Vol. I, pages 93-94.
- 102 Prince Albert to his brother, August 22nd, 1840.
- 103 Master of the Horse.
- 104 Prince Albert to his brother, August 22nd, 1840.
- 105 Stockmar to Prince Albert, September 8th, 1840.
- 106 Martin, Vol. I, page 85.
- 107 Duke Ernst of Coburg, to the Queen.
- 108 Prince Albert to his brother, May 30th, 1840.
- 109 Prince Albert to his brother, September 15th, 1840.
- 110 Prince Albert to his brother, August 1st, 1840.
- 111 } Prince Albert to his brother, August 22nd, 1840.
- 112 }
- 113 The Queen to King Leopold, September 26th, 1840.
- 114 The Prince to his brother, August 23rd, 1840.
- 115 Memorandum by the Queen, 'Early Years,' page 331.
- 116 Greville, October 24th, 1840.
- 117 Greville, May 9th, 1841.
- 118 Martin, Vol. I, footnote, page 97.
- 119 The Princess Royal, afterwards Empress of Prussia and mother of the Emperor William II.

Chapter Twelve

- 120 In the preface to his book 'The Coburgs,' Edmund B. D'Auvergne writes: 'It is the Coburgs who have made Monarchy respectable.'

Before their time, the King's trade seemed fit only for gilded libertines and gloomy tyrants. Leopold of Belgium and Albert of England changed all that. They introduced middle-class standards into the palace. They were excellent husbands and fathers, and showed the bourgeois that a king could be a respectable married man as well as he.'

- 121 'Early Years,' page 355.
- 122 Greville, September 6th, 1841.
- 123 Greville, September 7th, 1841.
- 124 Greville, February 17th, 1841.
- 125 Prince Albert to his brother, May 13th, 1849.
- 126 Prince Albert to his brother, December 25th, 1840.
- 127 Prince Albert to the Duchess of Kent, June 18th, 1841.
- 128 Memorandum by Anson, May 9th, 1841. Printed with Queen
- 129 } Victoria's 'Letters.'
- 130 Stockmar's 'Memoirs,' Vol. II, page 50.
- 131 Queen's 'Letters,' Vol. I. Introductory Note to Chapter X.
- 132 Stockmar's 'Memoirs,' Vol. II, pages 51 and 52.
- 133 Prince Albert to his brother, September 4th, 1841.

Chapter Thirteen

- 134 Memorandum by Anson, July 27th, 1841.
- 135 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, April 13th, 1841.
- 136 King Leopold to Queen Victoria, May 14th, 1841.
- 137 The Queen's Journal.
- 138 Martin, Vol. I, page 118.
- 139 Stockmar to Prince Albert, May 17th, 1841.
- 140 } Memorandum by Anson, January 15th, 1841.
- 141 }
- 142 These and previous quotations on the subjects of Prince Ernst's character and visit to England are from letters written by Prince Albert on March 11th, March 25th, June 28th, and Aug. 1st, 1841.
- 143 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, January 5th, 1841.
- 144 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, November 29th, 1841.
- 145 } *Windsor and Eton Express*, December 18th, 1841.
- 146 }

Chapter Fourteen

- 147 Memorandum from Stockmar to Melbourne, Nov. 23rd, 1841.
- 148 Peel to Prince Albert, October 4th, 1841.
- 149 Prince Albert to Peel, April 4th, 1844.

- 150 Martin, Vol. I, page 151.
- 151 Martin, Vol. I, page 123.
- 152 Consort of the Queen of Portugal.
- 153 Prince Albert to his brother, December 16th, 1841.
- 154 Martin, Vol. I, page. 133.
- 155 *Windsor and Eton Express*, January 29th, 1842.
- 156 Bunsen's 'Life,' II, 7.
- 157 } Martin, Vol. I, page 149.
- 158 }
- 159 Martin, Vol. I, page 161.
- 160 Martin, Vol. I, page 152.
- 161 Greville, October 13th, 1854.
- 162 Martin, Vol. I, footnote page 130.
- 163 'Girlhood,' II, page 135.
- 164 Lady Lyttelton's Letters, page 348.

Chapter Fifteen

- 165 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, February 8th, 1842.
- 166 Prince Albert to his brother, February 25th, 1842.
- 167 Queen Victoria to Melbourne, July 17th, 1842.
- 168 Martin, Vol. I, pages 142 and 143.
- 169 Martin, Vol. I, page 163.
- 170 This and other quotations in this section of the chapter are from the Queen's 'Leaves from Our Journal in the Highlands.'

Chapter Sixteen

- 171 } Martin, Vol. I, page 164.
- 172 }
- 173 Martin, Vol. I, page 165.
- 174 Peel to Queen Victoria, March 27th, 1843.
- 175 Peel to Queen Victoria, March 18th, 1843.
- 176 From Buckingham Palace, April 25th, 1843.
- 177 The Duke of Sussex, the Queen's Uncle, had surprised his relations by asking, in his will, that he should be buried 'in the public cemetery at Kensal Green . . . and not at Windsor.'
- 178 From Buckingham Palace, May 2nd, 1843.
- 179 Greville, February 29th, 1840.
- 180 Prince Albert to his brother, June 15th, 1843.
- 181 Princess Augusta of Cambridge was married to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg Strelitz, at Buckingham Palace, on June 28, 1843.
- 182 July 2nd, 1843.

- 183 } Greville, August 26th, 1843.
- 184 }
- 185 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, February 14th, 1843.
- 186 Prince Albert to his brother, November 23rd, 1843.
- 187 This refers to the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert to the Court of Louis Philippe.
- 188 Martin, Vol. I, page 199.
- 189 Prince Albert to Stockmar, September 10th, 1843.
- 190 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, October 31st, 1843.
- 191 Lord Melbourne to Queen Victoria, April 2nd, 1843.
- 192 Queen Victoria to King Leopold, December 12th, 1843.
- 193 'The Coburgs,' by D'Auvergne, page 179.
- 194 The Prince to his brother, December 19th, 1843.

Chapter Seventeen

- 195 The Prince to his brother, February 3rd, 1844.
- 196 The Prince to his brother, February 4th, 1844.
- 197 The Prince to his brother, February 29th, 1844.
- 198 } Prince Albert to Stockmar, February 4th, 1844.
- 199 }
- 200 Stockmar to Prince Albert, January 30th, 1844.
- 201 Prince Albert to Stockmar, February 9th, 1844.
- 202 Prince Albert to his brother, March 8th, 1844.
- 203 This and other letters written during the Prince's journey to Coburg are reprinted from Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort.'
- 204 The Queen had never visited Thuringia, although her mother and her husband were born there.
- 205 King Leopold to the Queen, December 15th, 1843.
- 206 Stockmar, 'Denkwürdigkeiten,' page 400.
- 207 Stockmar, see Martin, Vol. I, page 214.
- 208 Martin, Vol. I, page 218.
- 209 Earlier in the year, England's relationship with France had been strained by the Tahiti affair. The British Consul in Tahiti had been seized, through the indiscretion of the French officials. The outrage led to months of anxiety and it was not until September, a month before the King came to England, that the Queen was able to write to her uncle (September 14th, 1844): 'The good ending of our difficulties with France is an immense blessing. . . .'
- 210 Son of the King of France.
- 211 Martin, Vol. I, page 346.
- 212 Prince Albert to his brother, May 28th, 1846.

- 213 The Prince to his brother, September 17th, 1846.
- 214 The Prince to his brother, April 2nd, 1847.
- 215 The Queen to King Leopold, October 29th, 1844.

Chapter Eighteen

- 216 The Prince to his brother, December 28th, 1844.
- 217 The Prince to Stockmar, February 4th, 1845.
- 218 Martin, Vol. I, page 258.
- 219 Martin, Vol. I, page 260.
- 220 Lytton Strachey's 'Queen Victoria.'
- 221 The Queen to King Leopold, March 25th, 1845.
- 222 } The Prince to his brother, October 18th, 1844.
- 223 }
- 224 Martin, Vol. I, page 323.
- 225 Martin, Vol. I, page 249.
- 226 Note by the Queen, 'Early Years.'
- 227 The Prince to his brother, May 23rd, 1845.
- 228 The Prince to his brother, June 13th, 1845.
- 229 An annual festival for the schoolchildren of Coburg, celebrating an ancient benefactor.
- 230 This and other quotations in this section are from the Queen's Journal.
- 231 An estate which lies between Cologne and Bonn, at the foot of the Ville hills.

Chapter Nineteen

- 232 The Prince to his brother, November 11th, 1845.
- 233 Peel to the Queen, December 5th, 1845.
- 234 Memorandum by Prince Albert, December 7th, 1845.
- 235 Sir Robert Peel's 'Memoirs,' Vol. II, page 222.
- 236 'Life of Bentinck,' Disraeli, Chapter II.
- 237 The Prince to his stepmother, December 25th, 1845.
- 238 Memorandum by the Prince, June 8th, 1846.
- 239 Memorandum by the Prince, April 1st, 1846.
- 240 King Leopold to the Queen, October 10th, 1845.
- 241 'Denkwürdigkeiten,' Stockmar, page 466.
- 242 'Denkwürdigkeiten,' Stockmar, page 467.
- 243 Prince Albert to his brother, December 28th, 1846.

Chapter Twenty

- 244 The Prince to Palmerston, August 9th, 1846.
- 245 The Queen to Palmerston, April 17th, 1847.

- 246 The Queen to Lord John Russell, September 19th, 1848.
- 247 The Queen to Stockmar, April 22nd, 1847.
- 248 The Queen to Stockmar, April 22nd, 1847.
- 249 The Queen's Diary.
- 250 Martin, Vol. I, page 127.
- 251 The Queen's Journal.
- 252 Stockmar to the Prince, September 20th, 1847.
- 253 Afterwards Lady Augusta Stanley. The quotations in this section of the chapter are from her letters, written during the time she was Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Kent.

Chapter Twenty-one

- 254 The Prince to his brother, April 27th, 1847.
- 255 The Prince to his brother, March 14th, 1848.
- 256 The Prince to his brother, June 8th, 1848.
- 257 } The Queen to King Leopold, March 1st, 1848.
- 258 }
- 259 Prince Albert to his brother, March 18th, 1848.
- 260 The Queen to King Leopold, April 4th, 1848.
- 261 The Prince to his brother, March 14th, 1848.
- 262 Martin, Vol. II, footnote page 27.
- 263 The Prince to Stockmar, April 11th, 1848.
- 264 Martin, Vol. II, page 37.
- 265 The Prince to Stockmar, April 29th, 1848.
- 266 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 82.
- 267 The Prince to Stockmar, July 18th, 1848.
- 268 June 7th, 1848.
- 269 The Prince to Stockmar, July 9th, 1848.
- 270 The Prince to his brother, August 9th, 1848.
- 271 The Prince to his brother, August 24th, 1848.

Chapter Twenty-two

- 272 Greville, June 14th, 1843.
- 273 'King Edward VII,' Lee, Vol. I, page 28.
- 274 Lee, Vol I, page 33.

Chapter Twenty-three

- 275 The Queen to King Leopold, February 6th, 1849.
- 276 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 52.
- 277 Martin, Vol. II, page 163.
- 278 Prince Albert to his brother, May 13th, 1849.

- 279 Prince Albert to his brother, May 13th, 1849.
- 280 The Queen to King Leopold, August 29th, 1848.
- 281 Introduction to 'The Prince's Speeches,' 1862.
- 282 Lord Clarendon to Lord John Russell, June 7th, 1849.
- 283 Martin, Vol. II, page 207.
- 284 'Leaves from our Journal in the Highlands,' page 273.

Chapter Twenty-Four

- 285 The Prince to his brother, September 16th, 1850.
- 286 The Prince to Colonel Phipps, September 14th, 1849.
- 287 Prince Albert to Lord John Russell, September 5th, 1847.
- 288 The Prince to his brother, August 4th, 1850.
- 289 A British resident in Greece had made claims against the Government for pillaging and for a piece of land taken to increase King Otho's gardens. Without attempting the proper legal channels, the British residents had appealed for British protection and support. Palmerston, as Foreign Minister, had ordered a fleet to the Piræus, where the coercion of the naval force awakened the anger of Greece and endangered peace with France. Palmerston defended his action in the House, in a magnificent speech which defeated his critics.
- 290 The Prince to his brother, August 4th, 1850.
- 291 This and following quotations are from the Prince's Memorandum dated August 17th, 1850.

Chapter Twenty-Five

- 292 From Thackeray's *May Day Ode*, published in *The Times*.
- 293 December 10th, 1853.

Chapter Twenty-six

- 294 September 16th, 1845.
- 295 The Duchy of Cornwall, devised by Edward III, for his son, the Black Prince, is the estate from which the King's eldest son draws his revenue. When there is no living heir to the throne, the income from the estates is the right of the Sovereign.
- 296 This seems to be an exaggeration, although an examination of the Queen's letters shows that those written during the Prince's lifetime possessed a strength which was not so evident after his death.
- 297 Greville, October 8th, 1847.
- 297A The following institutions have been built upon the estate in Kensington Gore, during the three generations which have lived

since the Great Exhibition. They can be described as the practical realisation of the dream which Prince Albert sketched upon paper, when he was obliged to dispose of the Exhibition profits in 1851.

Museums: The Victoria and Albert Museum and Art Library; Science Museum and Science Library; Natural History Museum; Imperial Institute; India Museum; Imperial War Museum.

Teaching Establishments: The Imperial College of Science and Technology, Royal College of Science; Royal School of Mines; City and Guilds College; Administrative Offices of the University of London; Royal College of Art; Royal College of Music; Royal College of Organists; Royal School of Needlework.

Other Headquarters and Buildings: The Meteorological Office; Entomological Society; Institute of Physics; Optical and Physical Societies; Administrative Office of the British School at Rome; Royal Albert Hall, Queen Alexandra's House.

Chapter Twenty-seven

298 Martin, Vol. II, page 409.

299 Greville, September 23rd, 1851.

300 Letter from Lord John Russell to the Queen, June 18th, 1851.

Chapter Twenty-eight

301 Martin, Vol. I, page 172.

302 'The Coburgs,' D'Auvergne, page 176.

303 The Queen to King Leopold, February 24th, 1852.

304 The Prince to his brother, March 16th, 1852.

305 The Prince to his brother, April 23rd, 1857.

306 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 45.

307 Greville, October 22nd, 1852.

308 November 2nd, 1852.

309 The Prince to his brother, February 26th, 1853.

310 Martin, Vol. II, page 487.

311 The Queen to King Leopold, August 10th, 1853.

312 Martin, Vol. II, page 540.

313 The Prince to Stockmar, January 24th, 1854.

314 The Prince to his brother, February 6th, 1854.

315 Greville, February 1st, and February 2nd, 1854.

316 The Prince to Stockmar, February 2nd, 1854.

317 Martin, Vol. II, page 564.

Chapter Twenty-nine

318 Prince Albert to his brother, February 6th, 1854.

- 319 Memorandum by Prince Albert, February 11th, 1855.
 320 Letter from Mary Stanley, *MacMillan's Magazine*, Vol. V, 1862.
 321 Memorandum, Stockmar to the Queen, April 22nd, 1855.

Chapter Thirty

- 322 The Queen to Lord Panmure, March 22nd, 1855.
 323 } Martin, Vol. III, p. 351.
 324 }
 325 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 74.
 326 Lady Augusta Stanley's 'Letters,' page 85.
 327 'Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands.'
 328 From a letter written by Dean Stanley of Westminster, in the possession of Lord Stanley of Alderley.
 329 The Prince to his brother, September 29th, 1855.
 330 The Prince to his brother, June 2nd, 1856.
 331 The Prince to Stockmar, September 13th, 1855.
 332 Martin, Vol. III, page 381.
 333 The Prince to his brother, June, 1855.

Chapter Thirty-one

- 334 The Prince to his brother, February 19th, 1856.
 335 Greville, January 15th, 1854.
 336 The Prince to his brother, April 5th, 1856.
 337 Greville, January 22nd, 1848.
 338 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 162.
 339 Roundell Palmer, later Earl Selborne, 'Selborne Memoirs,' Vol. II, page 327.
 340 'Nothing but the extraordinary good sense of Prince Albert and the boundless influence he has over her keeps her affectionate feelings under due restraint.' Greville, June 1st, 1848.
 341 November 4th, 1858.
 342 Dean of Windsor.
 343 September 17th, 1885.
 344 This and following quotations upon this matter are from letters written by the Prince to his brother in March of 1857.

Chapter Thirty-two

- 345 In a letter written in December, 1847.
 346 April 9th, 1857.
 347 Martin, Vol. IV, pages 29-32.
 348 Martin, Vol. IV, page 96.

- 349 Mentioned in an unpublished letter in the possession of Senat
Präsident Hess of Coburg, descendant of the Prince Consort's
tutor.
350 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 103.
351 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 106.
352 In a letter to King Leopold, March 9th, 1857.
353 Martin, Vol. IV, page 43.
354 September 29th, 1857.
355 The Queen to Lord Panmure, June 29th, 1857.
356 Afterwards Dean Stanley of Westminster.

Chapter Thirty-three

- 357 The Prince to his brother, July 10th, 1858.
358 The Prince to his brother, November 18th, 1858.
359 The Prince to Sir Charles Phipps, October 20th, 1860.
360 'The Queen's Diary,' Martin, Vol. IV, page 272.
361 Minister for Foreign Affairs.
362 'The Queen's Diary,' August 27th, 1858.
363 Martin, Vol. IV, footnote pages 380, 381.
364 The letters are reprinted in Chapter XCI, Vol. IV, of Martin's
'Life.'
365 Martin, Vol. IV, page 398.
366 The Prince to Stockmar, January 27th, 1859.

Chapter Thirty-Four

- 367 The Prince to his brother, June 3rd, 1859.
368 From the account of an interview between His Holiness and Mr.
Odo Russell, the Queen's 'Letters,' July 17th, 1859.
369 The Queen to King Leopold, February 15th, 1859.

Chapter Thirty-five

- 370 The Prince to Stockmar, January 15th, 1860.
371 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters, page 156.
372 The Prince to his brother, April 27th, 1860.
373 Afterwards Grand Duchess of Hesse, mother of the Empress
Alice Victoria of Russia, the Marchioness of Milford Haven and
the present Grand Duke of Hesse. It is irrelevant but interesting
to observe that two of the best loved Princes in Germany to-
day are descendants of the Prince Consort. The Grand Duke of
Hesse and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha have held the affec-
tion of their people through the maelstrom of revolution and its

changes. As uncrowned Princes in the new régime, they have won with their own character, the respect and affection which was formerly the right of their crowns.

- 374 The Prince to Stockmar, March 17th, 1860.
- 375 The Prince to Stockmar, April 27th, 1860.
- 376 The Prince to his brother, February 29th, 1860.
- 377 The Prince to the Princess Royal, May 23rd, 1860.
- 378 Martin, Vol. V, page 99.
- 379 Martin, Vol. V, page 90.
- 380 The Prince to his brother, December 3rd, 1860.
- 381 Martin, Vol. V, page 149.

Chapter Thirty-six

- 382 Martin, Vol. V, page 275.
- 383 March 31st, 1861.
- 384 Lady Augusta Stanley's Letters.
- 385 To his brother, June 18th, 1861.

Chapter Thirty-seven

- 386 Buckle, 'Life of Disraeli,' Vol. IV, page 189.
- 387 King Victor Emmanuel.
- 388 Private information.
- 389 Hitherto unpublished letter, written on July 21st, 1861.
- 390 To King Leopold, April 9th, 1861.
- 391 Martin, Vol. V, page 354.
- 392 Martin, Vol. V, page 403.
- 393 Martin, Vol. V, page 415.

Chapter Thirty-eight

- 394 Martin, Vol. V, p. 417.
- 395 The account of Prince Albert's death is taken from Vol. V of Martin's 'Life,' from the 'Life of King Edward' by Sir Sidney Lee, from the Diaries and Letters of the Queen, and from the Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 'Luise, Herzogin Von Sachsen-Coburg-Saalfeld,' *Paul von Ebart*.
 'England als Erzieher,' *Max W. L. Voss*.
 'The Early Years of the Prince Consort,' *Grey*.
 'Life of the Prince Consort,' *Theodore Martin*.
 The Principal Speeches and Addresses of the Prince Consort.
 'V.R.I. Her Life and Empire,' *The Duke of Argyll*.
 'Leopold I of Belgium,' *Corti*.
 'The First Year of a Silken Reign,' *Tuer and Fagan*.
 'The Greville Diary' (Wilson), 1927.
 'Life of Dean Stanley,' Volume II, *Prothero*.
 'Memoirs of Baron Stockmar.'
 'Memoirs of Sir Robert Peel,' Volume II.
 'A History of Our Times,' *Justin McCarthy*.
 'Letters of Lady Lyttelton.'
 'The Coburgs,' *Edmund B. D' Auvergne*.
 'As We Were,' *E. F. Benson*.
 'Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands.'
 'The Life of Disraeli,' *Monypenny and Buckle*.
 'Fifty Years of My Life,' *Lord Albemarle*.
 'A Memoir of Baron von Bunsen,' *Frances Baroness Bunsen*.
 'King Edward VII,' *Lee*.
 'Letters of Queen Victoria.'
 'Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley.'

Magazines and Newspapers.

- 'Letters of Mary Stanley,' *MacMillan's Magazine*, Volume V.
 Contemporary files of *The Times*, the *Spectator*, and the *Windsor and Eton Express*.

Hitherto Unpublished Sources.

- The letter of the Prince Consort to his brother, ten volumes, preserved in the archives in Coburg.
 Letters in the collections of Senatspräsident Hess of Coburg, and Oberkammerherr Paul von Ebart of Coburg.
 Conversations with descendants of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and officials who were in attendance at the Victorian Court.
 Letters.

INDEX

- Aberdeen, Lord, 130, 132, 134, 144, 274
- Adelaide, Madame, 167, 168
- Adelaide, Queen, 52, attends Queen Victoria's wedding, 69; death of, 189
- Afghanistan, expenses of expedition to, 107
- Albert, Prince: birth, 9, 11-12; early training, 26 ff.; character, 8, 59, 185, 193, 241, 283; starts a journal, 27; his appearance, 33, 35, 37; his religion, 39-40, 60, 88, 92, 281; and his step-mother, 34; influenced by Stockmar and Leopold, 36-37; first visit to England, 42, 43; opinion of Victoria, 45; at Bonn University, 48; as a musician, 49; Victoria's early liking for him, 52-53; and idea of his marriage, 53; second visit to England, 56, 57; applies to Stockmar for advice, 58; difficulties in England, 61, 64-66; and the Duchess of Kent, 62; farewell to Coburg, 66; his annuity, 60, 64, 67, 99; visits Brussels, 67; marriage, 68, 70; his place in politics, 76, 77, 265; fondness for Windsor, 83; comments on his brother's conduct, 86; his social work, 93-94, 156, 183-185, 189, 204, 242; homesickness, 103; desire for society, 105; his 'status,' 109, 124, 214-215; President of Fine Arts Commission, 115; taste for sport, 125, 213, 243, 273; degree of LL.D., 125; first absence from England, 128-129; and Louis Philippe, 131, 157, 225; and Spanish affairs, 133-135; and the Arts, 139-141; visits Coburg, 144; and home politics, 95, 96, 148, 149, 150, 207; his wide interests, 152, 173; and the middle-class, 153;
- Albert, Prince—continued
made Chancellor of Cambridge University, 159; his concern in University affairs, 160; and German politics, 162; and political franchise, 166-167; as reader of newspapers, 174; love of statistics, 184; and foreign politics, 187; relations with Peel, 191-192; his speeches, 194; as man of business, 199 ff.; and affairs of Europe, 202; relations with France, 206, 207; and the Army, 210, 244; and the Fleet, 212; absurd rumours concerning, refuted, 213, 214; and Germany, 217; and the Crimean War, 218 ff.; his affection for the Princess Royal, 234-235, 236, 268; made Prince Consort, 245; visits Coburg, 251; meets with accident, 252; return to England, 254; grief upon the death of Cart, 255-256; and international affairs, 257; his great foresight, 260; relations with the Prince of Wales, 264; his health, 230, 252, 253, 258, 262, 263, 268, 272, 273, 280, 282-285
- Aldershot, 219, 233
- Alexandra, Princess, becomes Princess of Wales, 113, 264, 277
- Alexandrina, wife of Duke Ernst, 113, 114, 166
- Alfred, Prince, birth of, 137; 'educated for Coburg,' 238-239; satisfies his father's wishes, 264; sails to Cape of Good Hope, 267; to North America, 273
- Alice, Princess, 121, 216; her marriage with Prince Ludwig of Hesse, 265, 271, 273, 284
- Anna of Saxony, Princess, 22
- Anson, George, secretary to Prince Albert, 75, 95; opinion of Prince Albert, 98, 105, 126; his death, 189, 190

- Antwerp, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visit, 145
 Army, Prince Albert's concern for, 167, 246-247, 262
 Arthur, Prince, 216
 Arts and Artists, the, 115, 116, 139, 140, 153, 269
 Augusta, Duchess of Cambridge, 122, 123
 Augusta, Duchess of Coburg, 6
 Australia, 266
 Austria, affairs of, 172, 182, 261

 Baden, Grand Duke of, the liberalism of, 166
 Ballast-heavers, 242
 Balmoral, 175, 176, 213, 225
 Beatrice, Princess, 265, 270, 273, 283
 Belgians, Queen of the, death of, 194
 Birch, Henry, 180
 Bock, Charlotte von, 16
 Bonn, Prince Alberts visits, 145
 Bruce, Lady Augusta (afterwards Lady Augusta Stanley), 163, 164, 225, 275, 276
 Bruce, Colonel, governor to the Prince of Wales, 262, 277
 Brühl, visit to, 146
 Buckingham, Duke of, 151
 Bunsen, Madame, 159

 Callenberg Castle, 113
 Cambridge, Duchess of, 93
 Cambridge, Duke of, 93
 Campbell, General Colin, 247
 Canning, Lady, 144
 Cape, the, war in, 107
 Cart, devoted attendant of Prince Albert, 255
 Casimir, Duke Johan, 22
 Charlotte, Princess, 5, 6
 Chartists, the, 172
 China, war in, 107
 Claremont, 114
 Clarendon, Lord, 185, 233
 Clémentine, Princess, 169
 Clinton, Lord Edward, 24
 Clyde, Lord, 256
 Coburgs, the, 155
 Coburg, Duchess of, 15 ff.; death of, 33
 Coburg, Duke of, 15 ff.; 107
 Coburg, heir of ducal estates, 137
 Coburg, Prince Albert's visits to, 146-147, 251
 Coercion Bill, the, 158
 Cologne, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's visit to, 145
 Conroy, Sir John, 47, 279
 Conspiracy Bill, the, 249
 Corn Laws, 95
 Court, the reforms, etc., 109-110, 203
 Creevey, Thomas, 6, 42
 Crimean War, the, 211, 217, 227, 228, 232
 Crystal Palace. *See* Exhibition of 1851
 Cumberland, Duke of (King of Hanover), 48, 122

 Derby, Lord, 207, 211; speech in House of Lords concerning Albert, 214; resigns office, 258
 Dinner customs, 93
 Disraeli, Benjamin (afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield), 182; made Chancellor of the Exchequer, 208, 210, 211, 215, 245; his opinion of Prince Albert, 247; his opinion of Prince of Wales, 277
 Duelling, 206, 207

 Eastern Question, the, 213
 Eastlake, Sir Charles, 106
 Economies at Court, 109-110
 Education, 177, 200, 201, 229, 234, 244
 Edward (Albert Edward, Prince of Wales), afterwards Edward VII, birth of, 102; early days of, 104, 107; education, 125, 177-178, 216; at fifteen, 234; character of, 235; at Oxford, 237, 264; travelling abroad, 250, 262; to Canada, 267; at Cambridge, 273, 280; betrothal, 277, 284; marriage, 285
 Ellenborough, Lord, praises Prince Albert, 250

- Epsom Races, 77
 Ernst, Prince (afterwards Duke of Coburg), childhood, 10 ff.; love of sport, 16, 17; character, 17, 18; not popular, 19; early training, 26 ff.; to Gotha, 28; visit to London, 43; at Bonn University, 49; separated from Albert, 50; return to Coburg, 74; becomes Duke, 59, 136; suggested marriage with a Russian princess, 83; his opinion of Albert, 85; scandals concerning Ernst, 100-101; betrothal and marriage, 113; sale of family portraits, 166; disapproval of marriage of Edward and Alexandra, 277-279
 Eton College frescoes, 140
 Eu, the meeting at, 133
 Eugénie, Empress, approved of, by Queen Victoria, 222
 Europe, troubles in, 171, 172
 Exhibition of 1851, in Hyde Park, 181, 187-192, 198, 200, 233
 Feodora (afterwards Princess Hohenlohe), 3
 Fine Arts Commission, 115
 Flahaut, Count, 266
 Florschütz, Herr, tutor to Prince Albert, 21, 27, 32, 33, 37, 47
 France, visits of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to, 125, 223-224
 France, relations of England with, 156, 169, 174, 206, 207, 214, 233, 241, 249, 260, 262, 266, 272
 Franchise, political, 156
 Francis, John, 'scamp,' 116-117
 Frederick William (Crown Prince), 227
 Frogmore, 163, 285
 Gainsborough, Lady, 144
 Gaming, 92
 George of Cambridge, Prince, 93
 Gibbs, Frederick Waymouth, 180
 Gladstone, W. E., 265, 268
 Gotha, Duchess of, grandmother of Prince Albert, 29; death of, 169
 Gotha, estates added to those of Coburg, 28
 Graham, Sir James, 281
 Granville, Lord, 280
 Greville, C. C. F., comments on the Queen, 89; opinion of Prince of Wales, 234
 Grey, Lord, 162
 Hanstein, Lieutenant von, 17, 18, 22
 Helena, Princess, 90, 216
 Horses, 84
 Howe, Lord, 70
 India, matters relating to, 148, 182, 246, 254, 256
 Invasion, prospects of, 207, 211, 249
 Ireland, matters relating to, 158, 171, 172, 175, 185
 Italy, 156
 James, Dr. R. R., at Eton, 140
 Jenner, Dr., 283
 Kennington, Prince Albert's work for, 94, 184
 Kent, Duke of, 6; marriage and return to England, 7; and Princess Victoria, 14
 Kent, Duchess of, 2, 3; her difficulties in England, 14; opinion of the English Court, 25; 'making a queen,' 40; antagonism with William IV, 46-47; and Sir John Conroy, 47, 279; after the marriage of the Queen, 52, 62, 69; later life of, 112, 163, 164, 165, 248, 274, 275
 Knight, Charles, 25
 Kossuth, 202
 Landseer, Sir Edwin, 115, 119, 269
 Lehzen, Countess, 30, 51, 81, 110, 253, 279
 Leighton, Frederic Lord, 269
 Leiningen, Victoria Marie Luise of. *See* Kent, Duchess of

- Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (King of the Belgians), 6, 10, 14, 15, 22, 26, 33, 34; in London, 41; his ambitions, 41; his vigilance, 48; the Queen's devotion to, 52; approval of Prince Albert, 57; visits Windsor, 84; ideas on 'expansion,' 130; on government, 174
 Leopold, Prince, son of Queen Victoria, 216
 Liberalism, spread of, 166
 Liverpool, Lord, 144
 Louis Napoleon, 88, 175, 182; and Nicholas, Emperor of Russia, 212; at Windsor, 221, 222, 224; comment on Prince Albert, 242; and Italy, 256
 Louis Philippe, 131; his 'political dishonesty,' 133; abdicates, 168; his poverty, 170; death of, 193
 Louise, Princess, 169, 216
 Löwenstein, Prince, 49
 Lucknow, siege of, 247
 Luise, of Saxe-Gotha, marriage of, 1; to Rosenau, 4; her loneliness, 9; character of, 16; divorce and remarriage, 17; and Augusta von Studnitz, 1 ff., 19; attempted reconciliation with her husband, 19-20; leaves the children, 21; illness and death, 22-23
 Lyttelton, Lady, comments by, 84-85, 112, 131, 142, 152, 178, 180

 Malmsbury, Lord, 254
 Martin, Sir Theodore, 81
 Mary of Wurtemberg, Princess, step-mother of Prince Albert, 34
 Melbourne, Lord, adviser to the Queen, 51, 52, 62; speech on Prince Albert, 65, 76, 77; out of office, 95; on Albert and the Regency Bill, 80; praises Prince Albert, 96; letters to the Queen while out of office, 111; death of, 175
 Mendelssohn, visit to Buckingham Palace, 114-115
 Mensdorff, Count, opinion of Prince Albert, 30
 Montpensier, Duc de, 132, 133
 Mourning, 126
 Music, 113, 114, 208
 Mutiny, Indian, 246

 National Gallery, 139, 141
 Naval Review, 212
 Nemours, Duke and Duchess of, visit England, 79, 126
 New Zealand, trouble in, 148
 Nicholas, Emperor of Russia, visits London, 130, 211-212; death of, 220
 Nightingale, Florence, in the Crimea, 232; visits Balmoral, 243, 244

 O'Connor, Fergus, 17
 Orange, Prince of, 43
 Osborne, 141

 Palmerston, Lord, 60, 63; and Prince Albert, 83; in power, 134, 150, 157, 158; opposed by Prince Albert, 162; ignores the Queen's instructions, 193; and Kossuth, 202; his 'methods,' 203; opposes Prince Albert, 214; supports Prince Albert, 215; again in power, 220, 259; in agreement with Prince Albert, 268; visit to the widowed Queen, 285
 Parliamentary Reform, 257
 Peace, effects of, 243
 Peel, Sir Robert, 95; and Queen Victoria, 117-118, 149; and Prince Albert, 121, 149, 152, 190; return to office, and soon resigns, 150; supports Prince Albert in reforms at Cambridge, 160
 Phipps, Sir Charles, 240, 241
 Portugal, 156
 Portugal, King of, 42, 281
 Potato famine, 148
 Princess Royal. *See* Victoria, Princess.

- Prussia, King of, 145, 146 ; death of, 273
 Prussia, affairs in, 156, 174, 182 ; and Eastern Question, 217
- Regency Bill, 79
 Riots, 171
 Russell, Lord John, 60, 149, 150, 203, 204
 Russia, and England, 83 ; 'subdued,' 233
- Saint-Laurent, Madame, 6
 Saxe-Coburg, Duke, 8 ; death of, 126
 Saxe-Coburg, Duchess of, grandmother of Queen Victoria, 14
 Saxe-Gotha, Duke of, visit to Coburg, and his death, 16-17
 Saxony, King of, 131
 Scotland, 118-120, 161. *See also* Balmoral
 Sebastopol, fall of, 227
 Senft, Frau von, 10
 Sibthorp, Colonel, 196
 Solms, Count, 16
 Society, and social reforms, 139, 156, 173, 183, 269
 Somerset, Lady Augusta, 93
 Spain, matters relating to, 88, 132, 133, 156
 Stanley, Dr. A. P., his opinion of Prince Albert, 247
 Stanley, Lord. *See* Derby, Lord.
 Stockmar, Baron, his ambitions, 34 ff. ; and King Leopold, 36 ; his advice to Queen Victoria, 38 ; in England, 48 ; in Italy with Prince Albert, 54 ; and politicians' squabbles, 60 ; his liking for Prince Albert, 73 ; and the Regency Bill, 79 ; advice on household affairs, 84 ; his comment on Peel, 96 ; ever a critic, 79 ; re-visits England, 121, 125 ; sympathy with Prince Albert, 128 ; 'lectures' Prince Albert, 162 ; on the education of the Prince of Wales, 180 ; in England, in 1857, 244 ; receives Prince Albert in Coburg, 251, 256
- Studnitz, Augusta von, 1, 19
 Sussex, Duke of, and the Regency Bill, 79-80 ; his funeral, 121
 Szymborski, Maximilian von, 19, 20
- Taylor, Mr., British Minister, 7
 Tennyson, Alfred Lord, 268, 270
 Trent affair, the, 282
 Turkey, 211, 233
- University Reforms, 160, 161
 Uwins, Thomas, 115-116
- Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy, 277
 Victoria, Queen, and her father, 14 ; her childhood, 24, 25 ; advised by Stockmar, 38 ; her Confirmation, 40 ; first meeting with Prince Albert, 43-45 ; reliance upon King Leopold, 43-44 ; her character, 24-25, 44, 62, 72-73, 74, 92, 123 ; 'improves,' 154 ; accession, 50 ff. ; respect for Wellington, 51 ; and Queen Adelaide, 52 ; relations with her mother, 52, 279 ; sings to Mendelssohn, 114 ; love of dancing, 53 ; betrothal, 56 ; marriage, 68 ; influenced by Prince Albert, 74-75, 85, 110, 124 ; her religion, 88 ; and Sir Robert Peel, 95, 96 ; intellectual limitations, 99, 100 ; her courage, 116-117, 170, 253 ; as a letter-writer, 150-151 ; and Palmerston, 157, 158 ; and soldiers, 223 ; and the death of Prince Albert, 282-285
 Victoria, Princess (Princess Royal), 90, 95, 101, 103, 226, 234 ; marriage with Crown Prince of Germany, 235 ; life in Berlin, 254
 Victoria Cross, the, 232
 Victorian taste, 139
- Wellington, Duke of, respected by Queen Victoria, 51, 52 ; attitude of Prince Albert towards, 61 ; attends Royal wedding, 70 ; called a 'rebel,' 73 ; and Prince Albert, 80 ; at Prince of Wales's christening, 112 ; his death, 210

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| West Indies, trouble in, 107 | William, Prince (afterwards Emperor |
| William IV, and Princess Victoria, | William II), 264 |
| 30 ; on drinking water, 41 ; | Windsor, life at, 102, 103, 83 ff., 125, |
| not in favour of Prince Albert | 129 |
| on his first visit, 43 ; death of, | Wordsworth, William, Ode to Prince |
| 50 | Albert, 159 |

AIDE-de-CAMP'S LIBRARY

Accn. No...389...

1. Books may be retained for a period not exceeding fifteen days.